



NY gets tough on noise

NEW YORK (AP) — A city councilman is going to get a little louder in his fight to get the city to pass a law that would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. Councilman Mitchell S. Rubenstein said he would introduce a bill to force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. He said the bill would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. He said the bill would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units.

Monaco's Alben enters the world of cinema

LUS ANGLAIS (AP) — A French film director is going to get a little louder in his fight to get the city to pass a law that would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. Councilman Mitchell S. Rubenstein said he would introduce a bill to force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. He said the bill would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units.

McCartney's 'Standing Stone' premiered

LONDON (AP) — The Beatles' John Lennon is going to get a little louder in his fight to get the city to pass a law that would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. Councilman Mitchell S. Rubenstein said he would introduce a bill to force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. He said the bill would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units.

Morton's biopic of Diana is near the shelf within a week

LONDON (AP) — A biopic about the life of Diana, Princess of Wales, is going to get a little louder in his fight to get the city to pass a law that would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. Councilman Mitchell S. Rubenstein said he would introduce a bill to force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units. He said the bill would force landlords to pay for the noise of their tenants' air conditioning units.

Algerian Islamist group vows no truce

LONDON (AP) — A dissident offshoot of Algeria's militant Islamic Armed Group (GIA), known as the Hattab group, said in a communiqué received in London that it rejected "any truce or reconciliation" with the Algerian regime. The group, which is led by Hassan Hattab and operates mainly in eastern Algeria, said it would pursue its war against the "tyrants" in spite of a truce proclaimed by the armed wing of the banned Islamic Salvation Front.

PNA security agent escapes from Israeli prison

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — An imprisoned agent of the Palestinian security forces escaped from Israeli custody during a visit by his family, police said on Friday. Anwar Awad, a bodyguard of Palestinian Preventative Security chief Jehri Rajouh, was allowed a visit by his family in the courtyard of Jerusalem police station. Afterwards he was found to have disappeared, police said. Awad was sentenced last year to 40 months in prison for seizing an Arab merchant in east Jerusalem and taking him to the Palestinian self-rule area of Ramallah in the West Bank for questioning. One of his brothers, Jamal Awad, denied that the family had a role in helping his escape, saying they only learned of his escape when police came to their Jerusalem home asking about him.

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Israel arrests 29 illegal Egyptian workers

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police held 29 illegal Egyptian workers on Friday in preparation for deportation after arresting them in pre-dawn raids in Tel Aviv, police sources said. The police raided two apartments in a Tel Aviv suburb and arrested the 29 Egyptians, who had been working in Israel without permits. Police also seized a number of stolen objects found in the flat, including motorcycles, video machines and radios, the sources said.

Slain Arab attackers in Philippines were Palestinians

MANILA (AFP) — Two Arab nationals, killed in an alleged suicide attack on an army camp in the southern Philippines, were Palestinians carrying fake passports, a local television station said Friday. ABS-CBN quoted unnamed sources as saying the two Arabs, who attacked Camp Siongo on Tuesday, killing three people before being shot dead, were Palestinian students. They were identified as Mohammad Gharib, carrying an Egyptian passport and Ibrahim Sayed Ahmad, said to have Saudi Arabian and Pakistani papers. But the sources said these documents were fake. ABS-CBN said the military was looking at the possibility that the two attackers entered the country posing as foreign students but then dropped out of their classes. The military is also planning to contact intelligence agencies in Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States and Israel to try to determine the real identities of the two. The military had previously said the two were part of a group of foreigners training with a local Muslim group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). However, the MILF has denied the accusation and has suggested the two may have been arrested by the military for undisclosed reasons and then killed while trying to escape the camp.

Arafat to visit Paris next week

PARIS (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will visit Paris next week and meet with President Jacques Chirac, Arab diplomats here said Friday. Mr. Arafat is also to attend the UNESCO annual conference which opens on Oct. 21. The Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, said that top Palestinian peace negotiator Nabil Shaath will meet with French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine on Tuesday. The French government wants to see a stronger European involvement in the Middle East peace process at a time when the talks have ground to halt.

Algerian Islamist group vows no truce

LONDON (AFP) — A dissident offshoot of Algeria's militant Islamic Armed Group (GIA), known as the Hattab group, said in a communiqué received in London that it rejected "any truce or reconciliation" with the Algerian regime. The group, which is led by Hassan Hattab and operates mainly in eastern Algeria, said it would pursue its war against the "tyrants" in spite of a truce proclaimed by the armed wing of the banned Islamic Salvation Front.

EC releases \$44 million in aid to Kingdom's economic reform plan

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The European Commission (EC) last week announced that it released ECU 40 million (\$44 million) to Jordan in what officials described as part of the European Union's (EU) continuous support for the Kingdom's economic reform programme, launched in 1989.

The amount, aimed at supporting the Kingdom's balance of payment, is part of a European grant of ECU 100 million (\$110 million) pledged to Jordan last year. A tranche of ECU 60 million (\$66 million) was

released October 96.

The delay of the release of the second tranche was due to Jordan's non-compliance with some conditions imposed by the EU, and later met by the Kingdom, head of the EC delegation in Jordan, Yves Gazzo told the Jordan Times on Thursday. "These conditions were met by Jordan, such as the amendments to the investment law, the competition law, and (government's cuts) on expenditure," Mr. Gazzo added.

The financial package also aims to alleviate the external and fiscal pressures on the Kingdom's economy, and pave the way for a fruit-

ful association agreement between Jordan and the EU, which was initiated last April and is scheduled to be signed next month.

The EU's aid package is also geared towards a deficit free fiscal budget and zero deficit in external balance of payment by the year 1998 with measures implemented under the supervision of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The EU had earlier announced that, in its continuous financial support to the Kingdom, it aimed at having "closer involvement and active participation in the structural adjustment

process in Jordan, reducing the social cost of the reforms and ensuring that they are in line with the objectives of an imminent EU-Jordan association agreement."

The \$110 million package comes from the MEDA programme, an aid instrument adopted in July 1996, and based on the principles of the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995, namely launching of a Euro-Mediterranean partnership and reinforcement of financial and technical support from the union to its Mediterranean partners.

Security Council compromise reported in the works to toughen stand against Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Security Council diplomats are working on a compromise to toughen measures against Iraq but limit the scope of a travel ban against Iraqi officials proposed by the United States, diplomatic sources said Friday.

The U.S. proposal was aimed at punishing Iraq for allegedly trying to conceal information about banned weapons programmes and setting restrictions on U.N. weapons inspectors. Washington has asked the council to ban foreign travel by Iraqi military and intelligence officers and employees of certain Iraqi ministries. Chief Weapons Inspector Richard Butler said Iraq has threatened to stop cooperating with the U.N. Security Council and ban the U.N. inspections if more sanctions are imposed.

Russia has circulated its own draft resolution which would threaten new sanctions but stop short of imposing them now. Several other countries, including France, China and Egypt, are said to

be reluctant to impose new sanctions.

But diplomats said there was a broad feeling that a strong message needed to be sent to Iraq.

To avoid a damaging showdown within the council, diplomatic sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the 15 council members are considering a compromise which would scale back the travel ban from all Iraqi police and military officials to those who deal directly with U.N. inspectors.

This, one diplomat suggested, would allow the United States to claim success in tightening measures against Baghdad without offending those less enthusiastic about cracking down on the Iraqis. A Western diplomat said at least nine other council members had agreed to support the original U.S. proposal. But the key would be the endorsement of the permanent members — Russia, France, China and Britain in addition to the United States — which have veto power.

British Ambassador John

Weston said discussions would continue in hopes of drafting a proposal to submit for a vote next week. A Russian diplomat, who asked not to be named, said he expected the U.S. and Russian drafts to be drafted into a compromise resolution. He said that Russia does not want sanctions imposed immediately, as does the United States. He said Russia wants to delay any additional sanctions until the next biannual report by the inspection team in April.

The United States wants the council to add travel restrictions to the list of sanctions slapped on Iraq since President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, touching off the Gulf war.

During a closed meeting with council members Thursday, Mr. Butler said that Iraq's U.N. ambassador informed him that Baghdad "will cease all further cooperation... if the council adopted a resolution which included additional sanctions." The Associated Press obtained a copy of Mr. Butler's remarks.

Such a move would jeopard-

ise an oil-for-food deal that required much negotiation and "no fly zones" over northern Iraq; both measures were approved by the council. Iraq's U.N. ambassador, Nizar Hamdoun, confirmed Friday his government's warning to cease cooperation with the Security Council and the inspectors if additional sanctions are levied.

He would not say whether the non-cooperation would include all Security Council actions, which include a limited oil-for-food sale, or simply cooperation with arms inspectors.

The inspections, which have been carried out for nearly seven years, seek to determine whether Iraq has followed U.N. orders to scrap its nuclear, biological, chemical and long-range missile programmes.

Only then will the council lift the crippling economic sanctions, which were relaxed last year under the deal that allows Baghdad to sell limited amounts of oil to buy food and medicine.

Turkish commandos complete withdrawal from north Iraq

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish mountain commando units have completed their withdrawal from northern Iraq following a three-week operation against separatist Turkish Kurds and other troops are continuing to pull out, Anatolian news agency said Friday.

The crack troops have gone back to two bases in the northeast of the country and on the border with Iran and Iraq, the agency said.

Authorities in Turkey have refused to reveal how many soldiers remain across the border. Nearly 15,000 Turkish troops, backed by more than 100 tanks and air power, poured into northern Iraq on Sept. 23 to wipe out bases belonging to the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

Turkey said Wednesday that its troops and Iraqi Kurdish allies had killed 862 PKK militants. Military officials say the Turkish troops captured more than 10 PKK bases in northern Iraq. The PKK denies this, saying it has been successfully resisting the Turkish campaign.

The PKK has been fighting the Ankara government for an independent Kurdish state in Turkey's southeast since 1984. More than 26,000 people have died in Turkey in the conflict.

PUK says it captured 87 northern villages

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) has captured a town and 87 villages from a rival Iraqi Kurd group in the Belak region of northern Iraq, Iran's official news agency, IRNA, reported Friday.

The PUK forces, reported to be advancing in Belak, near the Iranian border, seized the town of Gelaleh and surrounding villages from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), it said, citing PUK Radio.

The radio did not give a date for the latest conquest, but said 100-square kilometres of Belak was being controlled by the PUK and allies.

It added that PUK allied forces were presently entrenched on Hasan Beig Heights which looks over Bradost region.

The PUK had previously claimed to have captured the towns of Haj Omran, Qasra, Chuman and Nav Bordan in the Belak region.

IRNA said earlier that the PUK and KDP were engaged in a fierce battle in Haj Omran and Qasra as they prepared large concentrations of troops for a possible major

confrontation.

"Right now bloody battles are underway," it said.

PUK troops and reserve militiamen in 16 brigades were called in on Thursday and Friday to military bases around the two towns in preparation for a major showdown, IRNA said.

"They have 12 hours to show up in Haj Omran and Qasra with complete military equipment," it said.

IRNA said the KDP has also summoned a "considerable number" of troops to its own bases in readiness for the battle.

The PUK of Jalal Talabani and the KDP of Massoud Barzani resumed fighting on Monday after a fragile one-year ceasefire, with both sides accusing the other of starting the clashes.

The two main factions have controlled most of northern Iraq in defiance of Baghdad since the end of the 1991 Gulf war. But their partnership collapsed in 1994 due to rifts over power-sharing and revenue.

France, Russia oppose U.S., Britain on Iraq sanctions

UNITED NATIONS (R) — France's U.N. ambassador on Friday said a U.S.-British proposal for travel sanctions against Iraqi officials was unacceptable and that he was supporting a Russian resolution that threatened new measures but excluded them at this time.

"At this stage it is not acceptable to us," Ambassador Alain Dejammet told Reuters, referring to U.S. draft resolution that would prevent army, intelligence police and others from travelling outside Iraq.

Council experts on Iraq met privately on Friday to see if any compromise could be worked out and the issue will be discussed in the full council on Monday, British Ambassador Sir John Weston told reporters he had "a large number of co-sponsors and supporters" for the resolution.

But without the support of France and Russia, who along with the United States, Britain and China are permanent council members with veto power, the proposal will fail.

Omanis elect candidates for parliament, two women

MUSCAT (AP) — Two women are among the 164 candidates elected in Oman's indirect parliamentary polls, officials announced Friday. The candidates' names will be forwarded to Sultan Qaboos, who will choose half of them to sit in the Gulf state's 82-member parliament. Thursday's elections were only the second time that women have run for seats in the Majlis Al Shura, an Islamic-style council that has no formal powers but advises Sultan Qaboos on laws and policy. In the last parliament, two women won seats for the capital Muscat. There were 10 female candidates. On Thursday, there were 27 women among the 736 candidates. Officials said that about 15 per cent of those who voted were women — an increase from two per cent in 1995.



Smoke rises above Naameh Hill, 15 kilometres south of Beirut, after Israeli warplanes launched an air raid on a base of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, but no casualties were reported (AFP photo)

Israeli planes raid guerrilla fighters base near Beirut

Civilian injured in south shelling

BEIRUT (AP) — Israeli warplanes attacked Palestinian guerrillas near Beirut on Friday, firing missiles at fortified underground tunnels, security officials said.

The jets swooped down from over the Mediterranean to hit the base of the Syrian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC) in the hills of the coastal village of Naameh, about 16 kilometres south of the Lebanese capital.

There was no immediate word on casualties or the extent of damage from the 2:45 p.m. local time raid on the base, which is made up of a series of steel-reinforced concrete tunnels dug in the hills. The tunnels are believed to store weapons and equipment.

Two jet fighters fired four air-to-surface missiles in two runs over the target, said the officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity. The aircraft also made several surveillance runs.

Witnesses said black smoke billowed from the stricken area, and residents in nearby buildings took cover in lower-level apartments.

Lebanese army anti-aircraft batteries along the coastline opened up on the jets, but no hits were reported, they said. There was no immediate comment from Israel on the raid on Naameh, a frequent target of the Israeli air force, said its guerrillas attacked the Tountat Niha outpost with rockets and machine gun fire earlier in the day.

Following similar incidents in which civilians were hurt, Lebanon has complained to a multinational committee monitoring a truce to spare civilians in the south. The committee is made up of American, French, Lebanese, Syrian and Israeli representatives.

Israel and its allies have occupied a border enclave in the south since 1985. They have been locked in almost daily combat with Shiite guerrillas seeking to drive them out.

wounded in the head by shrapnel as he loaded apples from a cold storage depot, the officials said.

The shell was fired from the Tountat Niha outpost, which is manned by the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army, west of the town. Hizbollah, the Shiite Islamist group leading the fight against Israel in the south, said its guerrillas attacked the Tountat Niha outpost with rockets and machine gun fire earlier in the day.

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Egypt, S. Arabia deny U.S. claims on attending Doha's MENA conference

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt denied Friday it had committed to take part in a regional economic conference in Qatar next month, saying its participation depends on a change in Israel's policy towards the peace process.

Israeli-Palestinian peace talks have been stalled since mid-March, mainly over Israel's settlement policy in the Palestinian territories.

The United States on Thursday sent an official request from U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright for Egypt to attend the conference, which is to be attended by Israel.

U.S. envoy Stewart Eizenstat said it was imperative to "separate political considerations and the economic conference because investors wishing to invest in Egypt

at the Doha conference hinges on a change in Israel's policy towards the peace process," the spokesman added.

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said Wednesday that Washington had obtained guarantees from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to attend the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) conference in Doha from Nov. 16 to 18.

But an Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Mr. Rubin's comments were unfounded.

"Egypt's position is unchanged. Its participation

and the Middle East look for a climate of stability and want to feel that the obstacles blocking the peace process do not undermine their investments."

Saudi Arabia also denied Mr. Rubin's statements that it had made a commitment to attend.

Both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have previously said they would not attend the conference, where Israel will be represented by Foreign Minister David Levy, because of the deadlock in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Syria and Lebanon have been boycotting the annual forum since its inception in 1994 in Morocco.

10 Israelis kept in custody over explosives sales to Palestinians

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Ten Israelis arrested for selling almost 200 kilograms of explosives to Palestinians, will be held for questioning for a further week, a court decided Thursday.

The suspects who own quarries in the West Bank were detained at the beginning of this week following the arrest last Friday near Jerusalem of two Palesti-

ans in possession of 80 kilograms of explosives. On Wednesday a court here extended the custody of two of the Israelis and took a similar decision Thursday for the other eight.

Police said the ten men had stolen almost 200 kilograms of explosives and 500 detonators several months ago in quarries near Jerusalem. They are alleged to have sold them to Palestinians out of greed.

Police said they believed the two Palestinians held were trying to sell the explosives to local builders, but would not rule out the possibility that the explosives were to be used for purposes of terrorism.

S. Arabia launches crackdown on illegal workers at end of amnesty

JEDDAH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia launched a crackdown on illegal foreign workers on Friday at the end of a three-month amnesty for tens of thousands of Asian and African "overstayers" to leave without punishment.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz warned that the punishments of up to six months in jail and a maximum fine of 100,000 riyals (\$26,000) would be strictly imposed.

"These penalties will be strictly implemented and violators will be severely punished," Prince Nayef said, quoted in the Saudi newspaper Arab News.

Saudi nationals who have given shelter to overstayers and people who breach residence and labour laws also risk being fined up to 50,000 riyals (\$13,000), he said.

But to curb abuse of a "sponsorship" system, Prince Nayef said authorities are considering the introduction of licences for national establishments to recruit labourers on behalf of citizens.

Under the current law, which is similar to systems operated in other Gulf countries, foreign workers are

brought into the country by Saudi nationals and only allowed to work for their sponsors. If they change jobs, their status is no longer legal.

Some Saudi establishments have already started to handle the affairs of Muslim pilgrims from the time of their arrival right up to departure, in a bid to curb the phenomenon of overstayers, the interior minister said.

Around one third of the kingdom's 18 million population are expatriates, mainly from Asia. Most of the overstayers are former pilgrims to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina, near the port city of Jeddah.

The number of people living illegally in the kingdom is estimated at around half a million.

In the rush to leave in time for the amnesty, which expired at midnight, airlines operating to Asia and Africa reported heavy demand for seats all week. "We don't even have first class seats for India and Pakistan," one operator said.

A source at the Egyptian consulate, quoted in the Arab News, said arrangements were being made for some

15,000 of its nationals to leave the oil-rich Gulf state by ship across the Red Sea.

Several other consulates said they had cases of nationals who had their "emergency travel certificates" issued by the missions under the amnesty, but were unable to find places in time on planes or ships.

They were seeking temporary permits to stay on until their bookings for departure, something the authorities have so far ruled out.

The Indian consulate, closed on Friday for the Muslim weekend, said it had still not processed all its applicants for travel papers and would continue issuing them on Saturday.

A Saudi government spokesman said Wednesday that there were about 1.3 million Indian passport holders in Saudi Arabia, but did not give details of how many had to go. Indians make up the largest expatriate community in the country and make up the bulk of those being expelled.

Saudi authorities, which have not given an official figure for departures, set up deportation centres to process

exit visas for those seeking to leave with emergency certificates.

"The amnesty will not be prolonged, even by a day," said the director general of Saudi Arabia's passport division, Assad Ben Abdulkarim Al Farish.

In 1996, the Saudi authorities expelled some 400,000 people several months after the pilgrimage.

Asian and African diplomatic missions say they have issued tens of thousands of passes for voluntary deportation since the amnesty was announced in mid-July, including for more than 35,000 Indians, who make up the largest expatriate community.

Among the Africans to have left are 30,000 Sudanese and 10,000 Nigerians, according to their missions.

But local authorities fear that as many as 100,000 other foreigners are still in hiding.

The passport department chief for Jeddah has said that a campaign to flush out illegal residents would be launched but "without inspection of family houses."



An Iraqi family answers questions by government officials conducting the country's official census on Thursday. Iraqis stayed at home on Thursday as the country conducted its first census for 10 years, the first since the imposition of sanctions by the United Nations following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf war (Reuters photo)

Iraqi population climbs to 22 million

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's population has soared to more than 22 million, a rise of 35 per cent over the past 10 years, according to official figures published on Friday.

A census conducted Thursday throughout Iraq, except the north where fighting is currently raging between feuding Kurdish factions, found the number of Iraqis is 22.02 million,

including 10.94 million men and 11.08 million women.

The census, which was carried out under a dawn-to-dusk curfew, involved some 159,500 public officials handing out questionnaires to Iraqi families.

The north of the country has been under the control of the rival Kurdish factions in defiance of Baghdad since the 1991 Gulf war. A recent census by the U.N.

World Food Programme said 3.1 million people lived in the region.

Recent official figures show that some four million people live in Baghdad.

The previous census in 1987, while Iraq was still waging war against Iran, found that the population was 16.3 million, more than half aged under 20.

During the first ever census conducted in 1927, the

population amounted to around three million inhabitants.

Official figures showed that national population growth is a relatively high 3.4 per cent a year. The United Nations has forecast that the Iraqi population should exceed 46 million in 2025. Hundreds of thousands of people died in the war between Iraq and Iran from 1980 to 1988.

'Closure of Hamas welfare offices hurts poor Palestinians'

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The closure of Hamas welfare institutions by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in a crackdown against the group has hurt thousands of impoverished Palestinians, Hamas officials said on Friday.

"Some 15,000 families in the Gaza Strip receive material aid and supplies on an occasional basis from the institutions which have been closed," said Sheikh Ahmad Bahr, head of the Islamic Institute, the largest Hamas facility closed by the authority.

"Six thousand families regularly receive aid every month. These families are the bitter poor, the families of martyrs, orphans, and for many of them our aid is their only source of income," Sheikh Bahr told Agence France Presse. Nearly 500 Palestinian women demonstrated Thursday in front of offices of the Palestinian legislative council in Rafah, in southern Gaza, demanding the reopening of the institutions, Palestinian papers said.

"There are many families which rely completely on the services these institutions give," said a sign carried by the women, addressed to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Palestinian security forces closed down 16 institutions

from Hamas' large network of welfare and service agencies in the Gaza Strip last month as part of a crackdown against the group which it launched under pressure from Israel.

In a meeting with Hamas officials on Wednesday, Palestinian security officials agreed to form a commission to examine reopening the facilities.

Mansur Abu Hamid, the head of one of the closed institutions, told AFP he had refused a suggestion that Palestinian police distribute supplies piled up in the institutions to welfare recipients.

Sheikh Bahr denied charges by the authority that the institutions were a front for the armed activities of Hamas.

"They are not part of the Hamas infrastructure. These are charity organisations which receive donations from individuals and groups here and abroad to help humanitarian projects for the poor," he said.

He said the heads of the closed organisations had sent a joint letter to Mr. Arafat asking him to reopen their facilities. "We are also thinking of turning to the courts to get an order to reopen them, since we believe their closing is an act which violates the principles of democracy," Sheikh Bahr said.

Khartoum reshuffles military leadership

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan has conducted a major reshuffle of its military leadership, replacing the armed forces chief, it was announced here.

Armed forces chief of staff, General Ibrahim Suleiman Hassan was retired and will be replaced by his deputy, General Sidahmed Hamad Siraj, an announcement said Thursday night.

The shake-up also shifted General Mohammad Al Sasousi Ahmad from the position of deputy chief of staff to moral guidance and spokesman to deputy chief of staff for security and intelligence. He is to replace General Mohammad Al Radhi Naser Eddin

who has been named deputy chief of staff for administration.

Former River Nile Wali (governor), Abdul Rahman Sir Al Khatim who was a retired army brigadier, returns to active military service. He has been promoted to general and becomes deputy chief of staff for moral guidance and official spokesman.

General Mohammad Abdul Qadir Idress has been dismissed as minister in the defence ministry and replaced by General Salah Mohammad Salih whose former job as deputy chief of staff for supplies will be taken over by Major General Abbas Arabi who becomes a full general.

Government slams Amnesty report of abuses

BEIRUT (AP) — The government on Thursday denounced an Amnesty International report that accused Lebanese and Syrian security forces of human rights abuses.

"The report's content is flight of fancy by some Lebanese who are in contact with this organisation, giving it false information that were adopted without checking its accuracy," Interior Minister Michel Murr

said.

It was the first official comment on the extensive Amnesty International report on Lebanon since the end of the 15-year civil war in 1990.

In the report that was released Oct. 9, Amnesty accused the Lebanese government of carrying out arbitrary political arrests, torture and abuse of suspects in post-civil war Lebanon in the name of consolidating

state authority.

It cited the arrest of suspects in Lebanon who ended up in jails in neighbouring Syria, which has 40,000 troops deployed in this country and is the main power broker here.

The London-based group said it was aware of at least 200 Lebanese nationals who were detained in Syria, mostly without charge or trial.

Mr. Murr said the prosecution

general will prepare a detailed response along with facts to refute "the slander and accusations made by this organisation which should have respected itself more."

Mr. Murr spoke to reporters after a meeting of the Central Security Council, a body comprising Lebanese judicial officials and military officers, including those from the Syrian army.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel. 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
14:10	Twinkle
14:30	Muppet Show
15:00	World Of Geo
16:00	The Valley Between
16:30	Beakman's World
17:00	French programmes
19:00	Le Journal
19:30	News headlines
19:35	Neighbours
20:00	The Newly Weds
20:30	Prism
21:10	Time Trax
22:00	News in English
22:30	Feature film
23:59	Ellen

PRAYER TIMES	
04:19	Fajr
05:37	(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:21	Dhuhr
14:34	'Asr
17:05	Maghreb
18:22	'Isha

CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church	Sweetieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church	Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church	Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation	Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church	Tel. 661656
Terra Sancta Church	Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

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JORDAN TELEVISION	
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PROGRAMME TWO	
14:10	Twinkle
14:30	Muppet Show
15:00	World Of Geo
16:00	The Valley Between
16:30	Beakman's World
17:00	French programmes
19:00	Le Journal
19:30	News headlines
19:35	Neighbours
20:00	The Newly Weds
20:30	Prism
21:10	Time Trax
22:00	News in English
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WHAT'S
FILM

EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL

MOTOR SHOW

EXHIBITIONS



PRINCESS RANIA ATTENDS ANTI-SMOKING MARCH: Deputising for Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein, Her Royal Highness Princess Rania Friday took part in the march to highlight the dangers of cancer and smoking, which was organised by the Jordanian Society for Combating Cancer (JSCC) and the Jordanian Society for Combating Smoking (JSCS). Taking part in the rally were members of the two societies and representatives of universities and schools, as well as the public (Petra photo)

Government concludes deal for tobacco companies, growers

AMMAN (Petra) — The government announced Friday that it has concluded a deal between the Jordanian tobacco companies and tobacco growers designed to help the farmers market their product in the 1998 agricultural season.

Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki said his ministry and the Ministry of Finance have received repeated appeals from tobacco farmers to help persuade the local tobacco companies to buy their product in the upcoming agricultural season and the two ministries succeeded in arriving at a solution to this problem.

Tobacco firms that have large stocks of locally-produced tobacco and are not in need of any more have agreed to buy local produce next year to process for export purposes only, he said.

The farmers agreed to limit cultivation to 29,000 dunums of land next agricultural season because the tobacco firms have a large surplus of unused tobacco still in store, according to the minister.

Dr. Mulki stated that though the government has intervened this year in a bid to help the farmers, it would not do so in the future because it cannot interfere in the affairs of the private sector.

He advised tobacco producers to take independent measures to ensure the sale of their product since, he said, tobacco produce will be subject to the principle of supply and demand according to the market's needs.

U.N., government teaming up to help Kingdom's impoverished

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which was observed Friday, marked a 1996 U.N. General Assembly declaration that the next ten years will witness the worldwide elimination of poverty.

Official statistics indicate that 20 per cent of the Jordanian population lives below the poverty line. Poverty in Jordan is considered a serious issue and the government has drawn up numerous programmes for the eradication of poverty.

These include the National Aid Fund (NAF), which provides financial assistance to those who are not expected to work, such as the disabled, female-headed households, and the elderly.

The NAF provides grants for family emergencies and has covered 1.9 per cent of the population this year with a budget of JD21.9 million.

The government is embarking on a food subsidy system that provides a cash subsidy of JD0.72 per person per month for households with a monthly income less than JD600. This system replaces the

"food coupon" mechanism for rice, sugar, and milk.

An important step the government has adopted is the 1996 Social Productivity Programme (SPP), which has the goal of eliminating poverty. The SPP stresses five basic needs, including health, education, information and technology, infrastructure, and effective governance.

The programme intends to make a visible impact on the living conditions of the poor and their income, and to assist them in finding productive employment.

The U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) has been working with the government in these areas, particularly the SPP, for the realisation of mechanisms for the reduction of poverty in the Kingdom. UNDP Representative Jorgen Lissner told the Jordan Times.

"Combating poverty, integrating the poor into the economy, giving them a chance, and opening up opportunities for them, is a good investment in a stable and [prosperous] economy," he said.

According to Mr. Lissner, Jordan is among the few Arab countries that has formulated and publicly announced "his intention to invest [substantial sums] in

anti-poverty measures."

The UNDP is working with the Ministry of Planning and World Bank representatives in the design and implementation of SPP.

Mr. Lissner described SPP as "a real combination of excellent measures that are needed in strengthening the abilities of low-income Jordanians in improving their lives."

However, policies must have a proper mechanism for implementation, and for this reason the UNDP, according to Mr. Lissner, is extending support to the Ministry of Labour in providing relevant training for unemployed Jordanians.

Further cooperation between the NAF and UNDP includes determining "who the poor are and what type of support they could make use of," he said, adding that studies are therefore being conducted to determine the current NAF beneficiaries.

To mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the UNDP is bringing together 70 people involved in poverty programmes in Jordan in a one-day seminar on Oct. 22. A local documentary, entitled "Face to Face with Poverty," will be shown during this event.

Tribal leaders, former military members competing in bedouin district races

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Tribal leaders, former army officers, and other candidates are contesting in the Nov. 4 parliamentary elections to win the six seats allocated for the three Bedouin constituencies.

The 51 candidates, representing the Northern, Central, and Southern Bedouin constituencies, are competing to win the allegiance of their tribal kin through promises to improve health, educational, and other services for the bedouins in Jordan.

The candidates' programmes also focus on solving the unemployment and poverty of the bedouins as well. Regional and foreign policies are not of much interest in the programmes of these candidates.

The Northern Bedouins constituency, where 14 candidates are campaigning to

win two seats, includes 41,565 voters.

The candidates represent the major tribes in the northern hadia such as the Qadi, Srour, Sarhan, Khalidi, Othemat, Sharafat, and Al Own tribes.

Among the candidates is the former speaker of the Lower House Sa'ed Hayel Srour, who is being challenged by his cousin Abdullah Srour, an engineer, in their native place of Um Ijmal.

Other candidates include Adoub Falah Outin, Deifallah Kheiber (tribal leader), Faris Qadi (retired army lieutenant), Fayed Fadel Madi (an employee at Al al Bayt University in Mafrag), and Mohammad Khaldi.

The list also includes Mohammad Athamat (a physician), Mohammad Mu'ar'ar (former deputy), Mohammad Breik (retired teacher), Mohammad Soud Qadi (tribal leader), Odeh Trman (lawyer), Sweilem

Sayan (a lawyer), and Zayed Arah Own (tribal leader).

In the Southern Bedouins constituency, which covers a large area in four governorates, namely Karak, Ma'an, Aqaba, and Tafleh, 17 candidates are contesting for two seats.

The candidates are representing the following tribes: Al Nourmat, Njadat, Rokeihat, Maneen, Saadiyeen, Rashaydeh, Abu Tayeh, and others.

Among the major candidates in this constituency are Mohammad Odeh Njadat, a former minister of State and former chairman of the fifth battalion, and Abdullah Haroun Jazi, a physician by profession and a former minister.

The list also includes: Ali Awad Noumat (retired colonel), Ahmad Abu Khalil (former government employee), Ali Mohammad Nueimat (a driver), Awad Salem Abu Tayeh (teacher), Bakhit Maneen (farmer),

Faleh Mara'yeh (teacher), Khalaf Rawajfeh (a former minister and retired army officer), Misha'al Abu Tayeh (tribal leader), Nazal Rukeibat (farmer), Ruweidi Sa'edyeen (a retired army officer), Salem Jazi (farmer), Salem Zawaideh (a retired army lieutenant), Sayel Mohammad Rushaydeh (a retired army general), and Smour Huweitat (a retired army officer).

The list includes Yusra Jazi, the only woman among the 17 candidates, who is running in her native area of Huseiniyeh.

The Central Bedouins district, the stronghold of the influential Bani Sakhr tribe, includes 20 candidates, mostly tribal leaders, retired army and intelligence officers, and independents.

The candidates represent the following clans of Bani Sakhr: Khreishah, Ziben, Kaahneh, Tayeh, Jhour, Dahamsheh, Jahawsheh, and Reidini.

Among the major candidates are Mohammad Adoub Ziben, a physician by profession and a former member of parliament and Jamal Khreishah, a former army officer who represents the pro-government National Constitutional Party. The two candidates represented the Central Bedouins in the former parliament.

The list also includes: Ahmad Bani Sakher, Badi Rudeini, Darweesh Satel, Deifallah Mansour Ziben, Fayed Dahamsheh, Ghazi Fayed, Hayil Zehin, Jamil Jahawsheh, Lafi Ziben, Mohammad Hukeish, Odeh Hmoud, Riyad Abu Tayeh, S'oud Zuhair, Saleh Jhour, Shayesh Khreishah, Soud Khannan, and Wisaf Ka'abneh.

One candidate, Deifallah Mitlak Ziben, recently had his candidacy rejected.

Three contracts signed for piping water to Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation has concluded three agreements for bringing water to Amman and for the exploration of water resources in the Kingdom with assistance from the U.S., Germany, and Japan.

The first agreement was signed with an American consulting firm working in conjunction with a Jordanian firm to prepare designs and tender documents for a project to bring water from the Jordan Valley to Amman.

The deal covers laying pipelines from the town of Zay to Dabouk, a point close to west Amman. The consulting services will be covered by an American grant of JD100,000.

Under the deal, the German government will finance the construction of the pipeline early next year.

Japan will finance in full the consultative services and the construction of the other part of the pipeline, which is to connect Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley to the town of Zay.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin signed the contract with the representatives of the American and Jordanian consulting firms.

Nearly 1 million citizens have received voter cards — ministry

AMMAN (J.T.) — The total number of citizens who have received their voter cards enabling them to take part in next month's general elections has now reached 916,810, of whom 479,092 are males and 437,718 females, the Ministry of Interior announced Friday.

According to a statistical report in Al Ra'i Friday, the percentage of total eligible voters who received voter cards in the Amman region was 39.96 per cent, in Irbid, 44.6 per cent, Balqa, 58.7 per cent, Karak, 68.8 per cent, Ma'an, 76.9 per cent, Zarqa, 30.5 per cent, Mafrag, 53 per cent, Madaba, 60.6 per cent, Jerash, 46.3 per cent, and Ajloun, 48.8 per cent.

A total of 561 candidates, including 17 women, registered for the elections, but 13 candidacies have been

rejected so far because the government said they failed to meet the stipulated requirements.

In a bid to provide more facilities to the public to enable them to receive voter cards, a ministry statement said Minister of Interior Nafih Rashid has decided to open an information bureau to answer election-related queries.

The statement said the public can contact the bureau by telephone at 701045, 701046, and 701047, or by fax at 701624, 701025, and 701626.

The minister has instructed district governors to open similar offices for the benefit of the public, according to the statement.

Questions about the general elections were discussed by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali during a visit

to Aqaba in southern Jordan Thursday.

Dr. Majali was quoted as saying the government encourages all citizens to go to the polling stations next month and will not allow any government official to abuse his or her position to promote any political party or allow any body or group to call for boycotting the elections.

Any official caught abusing his authority in this manner will be transferred to another post for violating the law, the prime minister warned.

Stating that voting is a constitutional right for all citizens, the prime minister said anyone found obstructing the election process should be punished.

The government intends to create the most adequate atmosphere for the upcoming

elections and enhance the process of democracy, according to Dr. Majali.

Candidates are invited to examine the government's measures and preparations for the elections and vote counting in the country's different regions, he said.

Accusing the Muslim Brotherhood of staging their boycott to embarrass the government before the world, the prime minister said Jordan takes pride in being a democratic state that is open to political pluralism and allows all kinds of parties in the field.

He expressed the view that the Muslim Brotherhood is a religious group that is not concerned with politics.

He said the government plans to submit a modern election draft law to the next Parliament.

Japanese women's delegation visits Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — A Japanese delegation composed of five women arrived Oct. 17 for a four-day visit to the Kingdom under the Exchange of Women Programme between Japan and Jordan, according to a Japanese embassy press release.

During their visit, they will attend a meeting at the General Federation of Jordanian Women, during which many

topics about women activities will be discussed, the announcement continued.

This programme was proposed by the government of Japan when their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath visited Japan in May 1995.

On the occasion of Jordan Week in Japan, the objective of this programme is to promote mutual friendship and

understanding between Japanese and Jordanian women through discussions and visits to various organisations and facilities in the field of women's activities in each country, the statement read.

Under this programme, two Jordanian delegations of five women each from the General Federation of Jordanian Women visited Japan in January 1996 and February

1997, while a Japanese delegation visited Jordan in March 1996, according to the press release.

It is expected that this exchange programme will contribute to further enhancing mutual understanding between the peoples of both countries, thus promoting the bilateral relations, the statement concluded.

Group issues new call for election boycott

AMMAN (J.T.) — A group of ten people calling themselves "The Movement in Support of Election Boycott" Friday called on Jordanians to boycott the 1997 parliamentary elections by giving support to the political parties and associations in their national reform programme.

In a press release sent to the Jordan Times, the movement's preparatory committee members stated that the government has gone ahead with its plan to hold general elections on the basis of the one-person, one-vote system, which serves only the interests of the government and ignores those of the people.

"We live in a state of deterioration of democratic, political, and economic life at a time when we are on the threshold of a new era. The government has insisted on holding elections on the one-person, one-vote system and has shown its intransigence clearly when it turned a deaf ear to all calls for holding truly representative elections," the press release said.

The statement added that the one-person, one-vote system breeds division among the people of Jordan, adversely affects the social infrastructure, and marginalises the role of the civil

institutions.

"Holding the elections does not meet our people's aspirations, in the sense that the elections will not turn out a very responsible Parliament at this critical stage," the release continued.

"Such government procedures do not respect public freedoms, since the next Parliament will be the government's vehicle to follow up the remaining parts and provisions of the Wadi Araba and Oslo Accords, which will finalise the stalemate issues and outline the final shape of Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian relations," according to the statement.

"Then, after the government passes all these resolutions and decisions through Parliament, it will put the blame on them," the release said.

The movement also called for a public boycott and asked those concerned to hold seminars and lectures and to send out invitations for all political parties to attend a meeting in Irbid on Oct. 23, to discuss this issue.

The preparatory committee members are Shihadeh Abu Shareef, Majed Khasawneh, Jamal Obaidat, Eidah Mutlaq, Faisal Tall, Salem Qudah, Najeh Khalf, and Amneh Zu'bi.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* German film "Der Austerexpress" at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 4:30 p.m.

EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL

* French film "Grosse Fatigue" and Italian film "Il Grande Cocomero" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 4:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. respectively.

MOTOR SHOW

* "Motor Show 98" at Amman International Motor Show (Tel. 714211), until Oct. 20.

EXHIBITIONS

* Ceramics exhibition by Ra'd Dlaini at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Uttheina, until Oct. 30.
* "Oriental Gem Trees" by Latifi Abu Hamdan at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Oct. 20.

Oct. 23.

* Paintings by Iraqi artist Walid Nasrallah at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Oct. 28.

* Paintings by Abdul Qadir Bakheet at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Oct. 30.

* Works by Iraqi artist Ali Al-Ebadi at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Oct. 23 (Tel. 55375980).

* "The Project of the Essence. Aspects of the Italian Paintings in the 90s" at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Yarmouk University, until Oct. 22.

* Exhibition of paintings and weaving entitled "Murmurs of Our Land" by Riham Ghassib and Bani Hamida at Bani Hamida House (Tel. 65889677), until Oct. 30.

* Exhibition of Catalan masters of the 20th century entitled "Aura Mediterranea" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until Oct. 28 (except Tuesdays).

* Quilt exhibition "Piecing It Together" by Virginia Harris at the American Centre, Abdoun, until Oct. 20.

Minister presents tourism plan to ambassadors

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji last week presented his ministry's strategy to promote tourism, which was recently endorsed by the Council of Ministers, to the ambassadors of 15 nations.

After the meeting, which was attended by Foreign Minister Fayed Tarawneh, Mr. Biltaji said these countries are the main source of tourists visiting the Kingdom and have strong links with the country. He said he briefed the

envoys on the ministry's plans for stimulating the tourism industry, and discussed progress on a number of tourism and archaeological projects in which these nations are involved and the training of personnel involved in the tourism sector.

He said the meeting was within the framework of the ministry's drive to boost the tourism revenues of Jordan, which he said enjoys the stability and security considered conducive to attracting

tourists.

The envoys represented Germany, Switzerland, the U.S., Russia, Norway, Spain, Italy, the U.K., Malaysia, South Korea, Indonesia, Greece, France, Finland, and South Africa, and included the head of the European Union delegation and the U.N. Development Programme resident representative in Jordan.

According to Mr. Biltaji, he urged the envoys to support the ministry's strategy and market Jordan abroad.

CONDOLENCES

The Staff, Parents, Children and Managing Committee of the **International Community School** would like to extend their most sincere condolences to **Mrs. Paula Williams-Brown**, upon the sad loss of her husband, **Dennis Brown**. Dennis worked enthusiastically for the school and was the Chairman of the School Managing Committee during his last two years in Amman.

Taleban 'ready to hold talks with opposition'

Traffic along the strait was unaffected and passing vessels were being warned about the clean-up operations, the MPA said.

Investigators were still trying to determine why the ships collided despite a radio warning from the MPA — acknowledged by both vessels — that radar showed they were on a collision course. Six minutes after the alert they crashed.

"They had enough time to avoid each other and visibility was good at eight kilometres which is normal," Colonel Lee Seng Kong, director of the MPA's shipping division, told the Straits Times.

human rights and pro-democracy groups.

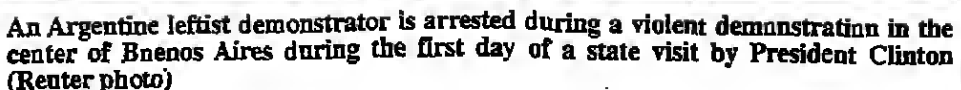
"It must be said that without the unions and employers a draft industrial relations cannot be made," said Confindustria Chairman Giorgio

strongly criticised Rangoon's military rulers for allegedly failing to crack down on drug production and trafficking.



An Argentine leftist demonstrator is arrested during a violent demonstration in the center of Buenos Aires during the first day of a state visit by President Clinton

daddy, now we don't say those kind of things," the paper quoted one of the organisers of the campaign.



family had a mummy and a daddy, now we don't say those kind of things," the paper quoted one of the

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Taleban
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ISLAMABAD (AFP) — The chief of Afghanistan's Taleban government said here Friday the group was willing to hold talks in Pakistan with the Afghan interim opposition coalition.

Mullah Mohammed Omar, a Pakistan-based Taleban spokesman, said the group should be treated as a political force and not as a military one. He said the Taleban was willing to discuss the future of the country with the interim government, but only if the interim government was not seen as a puppet of the United States.

The Taleban government, which has taken control of most of southern and central Afghanistan, has been in a state of siege by the United States and its allies. The United States has accused the Taleban of harboring Osama bin Laden, the suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks.

Queen Elizabeth's blighted India tour nears end

COCHIN, India (AFP) — Queen Elizabeth II, embarking on the final full day of her tainted state trip to India, visited the southern city of Cochin Friday.

The 71-year-old British monarch was due to visit the first European church to be built in India, as well as a synagogue and a community centre.

The six-day royal tour, coinciding with India's 50th year of independence following the end of British colonial rule in 1947, ends Saturday.

A series of diplomatic rows and hiccups, relating to the two nations' present and past relationship, have overshadowed the entire trip.

Cochin, in the state of Kerala, however, believed to be the site of the oldest European settlement founded in India, is associated more with Portuguese rather than British colonialism.

The queen, reunited with Prince Philip Friday after the royal couple followed separate itineraries in the south of the country, was expected to visit Saint Francis' Church.

The building, initially dedicated to Saint Bartholomew, was built by Portuguese Franciscan friars a few years after the arrival of explorer Vasco da Gama at Calicut, near Cochin, in 1498.

The queen was then due at Cochin's synagogue, built in 1568 by Jews believed to have arrived in India in AD 52. Six Jewish families still live in the city.

An international commodity exchange and a visit to a British-aided urban development project were also on the agenda, while the Duke of Edinburgh was to visit a newspaper and a British-aided home for street boys.

The royal couple will leave India Saturday. The queen's trip, her third state visit to India following those of 1961 and 1983, had begun badly when Britain reportedly offered to mediate over India's Kashmir dispute with Pakistan.

Media reports, later denied, said Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral accused Britain of interference and of being a "third-rate power."

Further spats emerged as Prince Philip was accused by Indian newspapers of being insensitive while visiting a massacre site of Indian civilians by British colonial troops. A speech due to be given by the queen at a banquet in Madras then had to be cancelled due to a mix-up over protocol.

Cochin, now a major port and the site of a naval base, has itself been the centre of a colonialism rumpus recently.

This time, however, the argument is whether the 500th anniversary of da Gama's arrival in India should be marked by celebrations next year.

Protesters are arguing that the arrival of da Gama, who died in Cochin in 1524, led to the colonisation of India by Europe and to centuries of oppression.

Palace, Downing St. try to limit Indian tour fiasco

LONDON (AFP) — Buckingham Palace and Downing Street embarked on a damage limitation exercise Friday to salvage something from Queen Elizabeth's visit to India, widely seen as a diplomatic fiasco.

In an unprecedented statement the palace denied reports that the queen was unhappy with the government's handling of the visit. It expressed support for Foreign Secretary Robin Cook who has been blamed for infuriating the Indians by offering London as a mediator in the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir.

The palace statement came shortly after Prime Minister Tony Blair ordered a counter-offensive in Britain to publicise the successes of the visits to India and Pakistan to counter the continuing controversy.

He is said to be worried that the war of words between Delhi and London is threatening to overshadow next week's Commonwealth conference in Edinburgh.

India has been claiming that the Labour government has a hidden agenda over Kashmir.

The palace said the queen was "entirely satisfied with the advice from the foreign secretary and his officials in the preparations leading up to the visit and during the visit itself."

She had "very much appreciated the warmth of the welcome she has received throughout the tour, which she is enjoying very much."

Mr. Cook, under attack from all sides, risked widening the political row over the affair when he suggested Friday that the timing of the tour was wrong. He told BBC Radio he had "inherited" the tour from the Conservatives and suggested it could have been arranged at

"some moment other than the 50th anniversary of India's independence from Britain."

Indian government Minister Jayanthi Natarajan told the radio that although the state visit had been "successful from the queen's point of view," there was unhappiness about "certain avoidable remarks" attributed to Mr. Cook.

Conservatives have made political hay out of Mr. Cook's discomfort. Shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Howard accused Mr. Cook of damaging Britain's standing abroad. He said: "Never has a foreign secretary caused so much offence to so many people in such a short time."

Former Tory member of parliament Harry Greenwood went further, declaring: "There is a feeling that the queen has been set up to annoy the Indians and that the British government has set out to diminish her. I would even go so far as to say that the government's dirty tricks department has been at work."

The queen's visit has been marred by a series of controversies, diplomatic gaffes and alleged protocol breaches which have turned what was meant to be the cementing of Anglo-Indian relations 50 years after the sub-continent won its independence from Britain, into a public relations nightmare.

A final snub came Thursday when India handed a speech the queen planned to give in Madras.

Palace officials maintain "nit-picking" has overshadowed the positive aspects of the tour and Mr. Cook described the Madras incident as a "storm in a teacup."

The queen was winding up her visit to India Friday with a trip to the southern city of Cochin.



An overview of the heavily fortified demilitarized zone which shows the South Korean barbed-wire fence at the bottom of the picture while a huge North Korean flag and the North Korean village of Kisongdong near the truce village of Panmunjom can be seen at the top of the picture (Reuters photo)

N. Korean guards abduct S. Koreans on tense border

SEOUL (R) — North Korean troops Friday abducted two South Korean farmers in the heavily fortified demilitarized zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas, the United Nations Command said in a statement.

U.N. Command spokesman Jim Coles told Reuters that North Korea has indicated to U.N. military officials that it would return the two farmers.

"It should be very quick," said Mr. Coles, adding several time frames had been discussed between North Korean army and U.N. officials at the truce village of Panmunjom.

Earlier, the U.N. Command issued a statement saying 12 armed North Korean soldiers "crossed the military demarcation line (MDL) and abducted two South Korean farmers in a rice field northeast of the village of Taesong-Dong, south of the MDL."

It said the North Korean soldiers took the two South Koreans — a man and a woman — to their side of the demarcation line, which bisects the DMZ.

The statement said there were no reports of gunfire by either side.

A spokesman for South Korea's Ministry of National Defence said Seoul had demanded a "safe and speedy return of the abducted residents."

Yonhap television news reported the two abductees were 66-year-old Hong Sung-Soon and her 41-year-old son, Kim Young-Bok. Both were residents of Taesong-Dong, also known as "Freedom village", which has roughly 240 residents.

President Kim Young-Sam was briefed on the incident but has made no official comment, a presidential spokesman said.

"If the two residents are returned immediately there will be no problem. But if they are taken north, the situation could last quite a while," the presidential spokesman said.

Television news reports said five South Koreans were working in a rice field inside the DMZ. Two of them went into the hills to pick acorns when they were abducted by North Korean guards close to the demarcation line.

The line which can be blurred by hushes, divides the four-km-wide DMZ between North and South Korea.

Incidents on the border are not uncommon.

Last month a North Korean soldier, who crossed into the southern side of the DMZ was shot by South Korean border guards. In July, northern troops fired mortar shells at a southern guard post in one of the worst border clashes in several years.

The U.N. statement said Friday's incident was being investigated as an armistice violation.

Most of North Korea's 1.14 million strong army is deployed along the tense border dividing the two Koreas, which are technically still at war. The 1950-53 Korean war ended in an armistice rather than a peace agreement.

The area of the DMZ where the two were abducted is under the jurisdiction of the U.N. Command, which is led by the United States forces in Korea.

The DMZ is the last cold war frontier and probably the most heavily armed border in the world.

Japan's boy murderer sentenced

KOBE, Japan (R) — A 15-year-old boy whose brutal attacks on younger children — including beheading one of them — horrified Japan was sent Friday to a medical institution where he can be held until he is aged 26.

If still judged mentally unfit when he reaches the age of 26, the boy can be transferred to an adult mental institution.

The eagerly-awaited sentence by the Kobe Family Court ended one of Japan's most gruesome murder sagas which involved ritual killing of animals, satanic worship, violent videos and hatred of the country's rigid education system.

As well as decapitating 11-year-old Jun Hase, the boy, whose name was not released because he is a minor, also murdered a 10-year-old girl with a hammer and assaulted three other children in separate attacks in this western Japanese port city.

The reign of terror, which forced parents and teachers to escort pupils to and from school, started on Feb. 10 and did not end until the boy, then aged only 14, was arrested on June 28 when he confessed to the crimes.

Fear reached its height on May 27 when Hase's severed head was found at the gate of a junior high school with a note stuffed in his mouth saying the killing was to take revenge on Japan's education system.

Police investigations revealed that Hase was strangled three days earlier and the boy used a knife and handsaw to decapitate him, briefly keeping the head at his home overnight.

Judge Yasuhiro Igaki handed down the sentence, which could lead to the boy spending the rest of his life in mental institutions, at a closed-door session attended only by the boy, his parents, five defence lawyers, and court officials.

Outside the court, scores of Japanese media waited to give live reports of the sentencing.

There are four medical juvenile training schools in Japan each with about 100 minors. They are facilities for delinquent minors who need medical treatment, either mental or physical.

In a mental examination report submitted to the court, two psychiatrists said the boy had sadistic tendencies and recommended his detention in one of the facilities.

The search for the so-called "Kobe killer" set off one of Japan's biggest-ever man-hunts complicated by taunts to police from the boy who wrote bizarre messages to local newspapers boasting he was "invisible" and would never be found.

After the beheading, the boy wrote in his diary Hase's killing was a "sacred rite" dedicated to an unknown god he called "Barnoidooki."

Suspicion fell on the boy when residents of his middle class neighbourhood reported to police that he had once beheaded a cat and strangled several pigeons.

In the boy's room, police found a stack of horror-movie videos and books on past murder cases, such as the U.S. serial killer of the 1960s nicknamed Zodiac killer, whose letters to police were mimicked in notes the killer sent to the media.

Rwanda tribunal indicts 2 more genocide suspects

NAIROBI (R) — The U.N.'s tribunal on the Rwanda genocide has indicted two more suspects including a former general in the Rwandan armed forces, a tribunal spokesman said Friday.

Former General Gratien Kabiligi and Aloys Ntabakuze, a former major and para-commando battalion commander, were detained in Nairobi in July and held at the tribunal's headquarters at Arusha, north Tanzania.

"They are jointly charged with genocide, complicity in genocide, crimes against humanity and with violations of Article three common to the Geneva conventions," said tribunal spokesman Bocar Sy. No date has been set for their next court appearance.

Judge Lennart Aspegren of Sweden, confirming the joint indictment Thursday, said there was sufficient evidence to provide reasonable grounds for believing the two men committed the crimes, a tribunal statement said.

Officials from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) working with Kenyan police in July arrested eight people wanted in connection with Rwanda's 1994 genocide of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Six of the eight were indicted by the court at the time of their arrest.

"Normally the procedures give the prosecutor a total of 90 days to present his indictment. Without indictment the person is a suspect, now they are accused and it is the indictment that changes their position," said Mr. Sy.

Gen. Kabiligi, 45, is alleged to have made anti-Tutsi statements and talked about the possibility of their elimination "within a short period of time" inciting extremist Interahamwe militiamen to kill, the statement said.

Mr. Ntabakuze, born in 1954, is alleged to have described Tutsis as the enemy and ordered subordinates to kill Tutsis in revenge for the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana, whose plane was shot down on April 6 triggering the genocide.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan sacked two senior tribunal officials in January after the body was sharply criticised in an internal report for financial mismanagement, corruption and nepotism.

A total of 21 suspects are detained in Arusha while three more are held abroad, the tribunal said. Three trials have started. The court, whose maximum penalty is life imprisonment, has yet to complete a trial.

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Hamas in throes of peace

THE FALLOUT from the release of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin from an Israeli jail in the wake of the failed attempt on the life of the Movement's Politburo Chief Khalid Misha'al last month continues to resonate across religious and political lines. There is no doubt that Hamas emerged triumphant from the botched attempt, which was carried out by a group of Mossad agents, with its political fortunes dramatically increased on both the Palestinian and Israeli fronts. The image of Hamas was greatly transformed from that terrorist group to a party that is seeking justice for its own people and peace with the Israelis at an acceptable price.

It was Misha'al himself who first hinted, in the aftermath of the attempt on his life, that an Israeli-Hamas dialogue was not beyond the realm of the possible provided Israel took bold measures to recognise the rights of the Palestinian people on their soil and stopped its unilateral actions to pre-empt the future of the occupied territories. Sheikh Yassin even went further by drawing a framework for eventual coexistence between Jews and Muslims, where they could live in peace and harmony side-by-side.

The olive branch that Hamas has extended to Israel took a vivid expression when its Islamist leaders informed His Majesty King Hussein of their willingness to declare an effective ceasefire with Israel and called on him to pass this offer to Israel. The chain of events came to a head when Sheikh Yassin received in his Gaza base Sephardic Chief Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron and Rabbi Menachem Froman of Tel-Aviv and discussed with them interfaith understanding between the two faiths.

Of course all sides agree that in order for peace to take root in the Middle East, it must be founded, inter alia, on inter-religious tolerance if not outright inter-religious understanding. There is also no hope of ever establishing a culture of peace in the minds and hearts of Arabs and Jews unless the religious dimension is duly noted and respected. Hamas and Israeli religious leaders have taken the first critical step and may well be heading towards meeting that objective. If Hamas succeeds in establishing a foothold in the Israeli body politic, it would prove to be a breakthrough that could contribute greatly to Arab-Israeli peace.

The fact that Sheikh Yassin has pledged to seek and work out a rapprochement with Israeli and Jewish leaders through the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) promises to reduce rivalry and friction between the PNA and Hamas to a minimum. In actual terms, both Hamas and the PNA can lend support to each other's quest for justice, peace and coexistence. After all both parties are integral parts of the Palestinian nation which is unanimous on attaining full recognition, sovereignty and independence in the West Bank and Gaza.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AI Ra'i's Sultan Hattab said that despite the boycott of some opposition groups the general elections will take place next month on schedule and most probably the majority of eligible voters will turn out to cast ballots. Remarks heard here and there by some people accusing the government in advance of staging the elections and claiming that the next parliament would be weak and would not be able to oppose any government policies or air its view on different issues are not heeded by the Jordanian public which is determined to create a parliament that would contribute to the country's development in the coming century, said the writer. He said the Jordanian people have a responsibility to choose the best and most eligible candidates to represent them in over the next four years, and it is therefore important for the Jordanians not only to take part in voting but also to elect those who are worthy of their trust and who can help Jordan deal with the challenges in the coming century.

Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan said that because Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended the Mossad agents' act in Amman and issued further threats at his press conference upon their return to Israel, Jordanians have every reason to be on their guard for more similar attacks. Netanyahu has threatened to strike at what he called any place harbouring terrorists, and therefore he is likely to send Mossad agents with chemical weapons to repeat their attacks in the streets of Amman or other parts of the Arab World, said the writer. The government did well in ordering the expulsion of Mossad agents from the Israeli embassy in Amman but should have ascertained whether those to be expelled have taken part in the attack on Hamas official Khaled Misha'al along with the other two who were caught in the act, he said. The government should have also pursued this matter at the international level, lodging a complaint with the U.N. Security Council against Israel's use of chemical weapons for assassination attempts abroad, Adwan said. Jordan, he said, should not close the Misha'al file but should pursue all efforts that would fend off further danger to this country.

Jordanian Perspective

Opposition candidates exercise democratic rights

AS ELECTION day draws nears, indications are stronger that contrary to pessimist predictions of boycotts, every party will be taking part in the polls, directly and indirectly.

Whether they admit it in public or otherwise, several major groups in Jordan which have been "threatening" to boycott the polls have slowly entered the arena. These include the Baath nationalists, communists and centrists as well as Islamists.

No one can deny that the decision by some former members of the Islamist parliamentary bloc, including Abdullah Akaileh, Fayez Rabieeh, Ali Fakir, Ahmad Kassasbeh, and Mohammad Khreibat Azaideh, to run in the elections indicates a clear dent in the self-assumed "hardline" position adopted by the mainstream Islamic movement in the country.

The participation of these prominent members of the movement means that the Islamists are indeed participating in the elections. Of course, there could be counter arguments that the mainstream Islamist Action Front (IAF) is staying away from the elections no matter what. But can the party deny that it would seek to play a legislative role, albeit by proxy, if and when these candidates win the elections?

Having said that, however, what we Jordanians need is not only the participation of Islamists in the elections but the victory of some of them to strike a balance in the make-up of our next Parliament.

The decision to run by some members does indicate a crack in the Islamist movement. The group's leaders should be gratified that there are among them people who have really understood and accepted the concept of democracy. Staying away from elections is not part of

democratic life, which calls for strong participation by everyone concerned with the future of the country and society.

A simple declaration of a boycott of elections borders on a public disavowal of any interest in the country's affairs regardless of the given reasons.

For one thing, the Islamists who have their "boycott" of the elections on Jordan's firm commitment to the peace treaty with Israel seem not to have appreciated the fact that it is up to them to muster a majority and try to fight the peace treaty from within Parliament. If they are unable to gain a majority among the elected representatives of the people, then that simply belies their claim that a majority of Jordanians oppose the state of peace with Israel.

For another, if the Islamists are committed and dedicated to preserving the freedom of the media as they repeatedly affirm in the context of the amendments to the Press and Publications Law, then they should also appreciate that their declared objective of reversing the amendments cannot be achieved without majority clout in the legislature in line with our Constitution. As such, by staying away from the polls, the Islamists are sending a message to their electorate that they have thrown in the towel.

Finally, we come to the Islamists' vehement rejection of the one-person, one-vote formula. They argue that the formula is undemocratic. Now, this is an interesting aspect that the Islamists have made the mistake of embracing. Let us look at the advanced democracies in the West, and if the West cannot serve as an example as far as the Islamists are concerned, let us turn east and take an Asian country, India — the largest democracy in the world — as an example.

India today has more than 500 million eligible voters.

But everyone of them has the right to only one vote for the central parliament and another vote for the state legislature. And India's experience so far clearly demonstrates that the country is indeed truly democratic. How else could anyone explain the ongoing trial of a former prime minister and hundreds of former ministers and senior officials on charges of corruption?

There are dozens of examples that clearly show that the one-person, one-vote concept is the bedrock of any true democracy. And if the Islamists are fighting the concept, then there is something clearly wrong in their own perceptions of democracy. For the last three years, we have heard consecutive governments offering dialogue with the Islamists on all issues related to elections except the one-person, one-vote concept and formula, and we also heard Islamist rejections of the offer every time.

Quite simply, the Islamists' stand rings hollow when viewed in light of logic and universal practices.

On the other hand, however, we cannot but rule out the possibility that the participation of Islamist candidates as independents in the elections is a clever camouflage that might last only until election day. When results are pronounced, we could find a dozen or so springing up and declaring allegiance to the mainstream Islamist political party in the country.

We cannot but welcome such a development, if indeed that is the case, because what we need is the presence of every political colour and ideology in our legislature. And only those with strong convictions can hope to achieve anything in terms of our immediate and pressing objective of improving the lot of Jordanians in terms of standard of living and the elimination of poverty from our midst.

By Dr. Musa Keilani

A western Christian force encourages Zionism as a means to fulfilling a prophecy

By Pascal B. Karny

AMONG THE reasons that the U.S. and Europe have for supporting the furtherance of Zionism is one that may escape many. Some of the Christian sects, particularly the Evangelicals, believe that the return of the Jews to Palestine will augur well for the second coming of Christ and the consequent conversion of the Jews to Christianity. This belief is obviously wrong from the point of view of the Christian religion as it has no bases whatsoever in the Christian faith and doctrine. Nevertheless the Zionist Jews were clever and shrewd enough in propagating this belief so as to achieve their ultimate purpose, the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

This belief is embraced particularly by the Evangelical Christians who are more Zionist than the Zionists themselves and who support Israel under the belief that the return of the Jews to Palestine is a biblical prophecy. In a book entitled "America's Evangelicals — More Zionist than the Zionists," the author, William Claiborne, states the following: "Estimated at 40 million members and embracing Abraham's Covenant as fervently as the most impassioned Zionists, their burgeoning Evangelical Christian movement in the United States is fast becoming one of Israel's potent allies in the conflict with the Arab World. They issue warnings with beatific certainty that a great conflagration with the Soviet Union in the Middle East is a biblical prophecy and promise that the United States will come to Israel's rescue." Of course, nothing of that alleged proph-

cy has been realised as the Soviet Union collapsed without any conflagration.

Some naive Evangelicals have actually opened what is called a "Christian Embassy" in Jerusalem with the preposterous purpose of converting Jews to Christianity and thus hasten the second coming of Christ.

There are thousands of Christian churches and communities, however, who reject the mythical belief of those Evangelicals. In effect, an ecumenical group of Christians — including Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox — met in Illinois in 1979 and 1981 and issued two declarations called the "Lagrange Declarations."

The first declaration contained in part the following: "We are anguished by the fact that countless Christians believe that the Bible gives to the modern state of Israel a divine right, divine sanction to the state of Israel's policy of territorial acquisition. We believe that such an understanding must be judged in the light of the whole Biblical Revelation affirming that in the revelation of Jesus Christ, God's Covenants find their completion." The declaration goes on to state: "Forthrightly, we declare our conviction that, in the process of establishing the state of Israel a deep injustice was done to the Palestinian people: confiscating their land and driving many into exile and even death. We are further grieved by the ongoing denial of basic civil rights of those Arabs who live today in the state of Israel."

The Second Lagrange Declaration of 1981 stated in part: "We question hitherto the vision of nationalism and statehood

limited to particular people as the means for building a durable and just peace in the Holy Land. We long rather for the vision of the land and peoplehood secured for both Israeli people and the Palestinian people in the Holy Land. We question how Christians can believe that the Old Testament gives the modern state of Israel divine and unconditional ownership of the land of Palestine, to the exclusion of the indigenous people. We believe that an honest, open and comprehensive understanding of the Bible prohibits these claims and raises the priority of God's justice for all peoples as the means to nourish the hope of reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians."

Mr. Colin Chapman, a member of the Episcopal Church, impugns in his book "Whose Promised Land," the alleged prophecy about the return of the Jews to Palestine. He says: "That any Christian who is concerned with the problem of the land of Palestine, should demonstrate his concern by doing all he can to find out the truth about the land, that we have no right to turn to the Bible for guidance if we do not know the whys and wherefores of the return of the Jews to the land and the establishment of the state of Israel, or if we have been fed by a very one-sided version of what happened." Mr. Chapman even questions whether the Jews believing in the prophecy have acted according to the law by asking about how the Jews have acquired the land and how they have treated the Arabs; how much of the land has been acquired illegally by being stolen, confiscated or expropriated. "And are the

Jews treating the Arabs as if they are their own native-born, or are they oppressing them and ill-treating them?"

As a Christian, Chapman feels that he is bound to conclude that the promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants does not give the Jews a divine right to possess the land for all times. The author does not believe that the state of Israel is of God in the sense that it is the fulfilment (or even a preliminary stage of fulfilment) of all that God promised and predicted in the Old Testament about the future of the land and its people. For a Christian to interpret these events simply as the fulfilment of prophecy represents a kind of regression which constitutes a return to a way of thinking which the disciples of Christ had abandoned once and for all when they grasped the kind of spiritual kingdom which Christ had inaugurated through his death and resurrection.

It is indeed some consolation for the Palestinians to know that the participants in the Lagrange Declarations have unequivocally urged the United States to curtail subsidies to the government of Israel until the latter ceases all illegal seizures of property, establishment of settlements on Palestinian land and expulsion of Palestinians. It is a consolation also to find that there are unbiased and courageous Americans who forthrightly reject the myth of the promised land to the Jews notwithstanding the nefarious influence of some of the American Jews and particularly of the powerful lobby — the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

THE WEEK IN PRINT

REVIEWED BY ELIA NASRALLAH

THE ELECTION campaign in Jordan, domestic issues, repercussions of Israel's assassination attempt on Hamas official Khaled Misha'al as well as pan-Arab issues last week dominated the op-ed pages of the local dailies.

In Al Ra'i, Tareq Masarweh criticised the government's removal of campaign banners that referred to Israel as the Zionist enemy. The Constitution guarantees the right to free expression regardless of any treaty or agreement with other countries, Masarweh said. He said, the treaty signed between Jordan and Israel in Wadi Arabia can by no means deny the Jordanian people the right to express their views freely. If Jordanians should not refer to Israel as an enemy, then at least 10 Israeli political parties ought to change their ideology and their logos which openly consider all Arabs enemies and do not conceal their ambitious designs of occupying Arab land, Masarweh said.

Nazih Qousous of Al Dustour demanded that candidates running in the elections next month meet requirements other than those stipulated by the Ministry of Interior. "We need to see intellectual and cultured people representing us in Parliament, deputies who realise the ills of their country and the needs of their people, and have the courage not only in taking part in debates, but also in improving the

socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country," Qousous said. He said, it is not necessary that a candidate be a university graduate but at least should have acquired sufficient experience and education and should be able to defend the public's interests.

The writer said Jordanians do not want deputies who act only in the interests of their own districts but rather deputies who can address issues of national concern, including foreign relations. According to Al Ra'i's Fakhri Kassar, candidates with more wealth are the ones with a better chance of winning in next month's general elections. Candidates who can afford to put up banners on every street and place campaign advertisements on television and radio, said Kassar, are in a position to air their views and present their programmes to the public, unlike many other contenders who cannot afford such luxuries. It would have been a realistic and acceptable situation had the radio and television media allowed all candidates to use their facilities free of charge, he said. By allowing only those who can afford the cost of messages to advertise, said the writer, Jordan Radio and Television is treating campaign messages like any other advertisements about food, sweets, shoes, perfumes and the numerous other items that are commercially promoted day and night.

Addressing the possession of large amounts of fire arms by individuals, especially from the tribes, Mohammad Subeini of Arab Al Yawm said the automatic weapons which these people have are not intended to fight a war in defence of Jordan but rather to be used on social occasions. These dangerous weapons are also used by criminals and by revenge seekers, a phenomenon that poses a constant danger to the public, said the writer. Sophisticated weapons which were confiscated from smugglers recently were definitely brought into the country for evil purposes, and thus encourage the public to believe that Jordan is in danger or it is targeted by internal as well as external enemies, he added. Recalling that firearms have killed and maimed scores of people during weddings and other celebratory occasions, the writer demanded that strict penalties be imposed on those who possess unlicensed weapons, those who possess or use automatic weapons and those who smuggle fire arms into the country.

Mohammad Daoud a writer for Al Dustour daily discussed privatisation in Jordan noting that the government seems to be taking speedy measures to privatise most of its institutions. But the writer said that the government seems at the same time holding on to its shares in local dailies obviously in a bid to control the media and restrict free expression. It is unacceptable to see the government holding on to its shares in only two of the local dailies and no others, and there is no justification for retaining its shares in the media at large because this is in contravention of the law and conflicting with

the government's own ideas of privatisation, stressed the writer. He said the time has come for the government to take measures without any delay to end its partnership in the press by selling its shares and utilising the money in development schemes. Writing about the Khaled Misha'al case, Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Subeini, said those who dream of peace with Israel and those deceived by the Israeli claims about their desire to live in peace with the Arabs can no longer convince the public of their ideas. "We want those who are deceived by the so-called new world order and U.N. resolutions to realise that there can be no peaceful coexistence among the children of Abraham, and no one can convince the Jordanians from now on of the idea that Israel's dream of creating a substitute Palestinian homeland in Jordan has been buried forever," said Subeini. He said that only through Jordan's intrinsic force and national unity and affiliation to and close cooperation with the other Arab countries can the Kingdom ensure its security.

Another Arab Al Yawm writer, Khaled Zubeidi, said the private sector's apprehensions about the danger inherent in Israel's ambitions are justified because the Jewish state seeks normalisation with the Arabs in order to impose hegemony on their wealth and their economy. The private sector is right to warn against the dangers of the Doha economic meeting and its call for boycotting the parley next month because Israel plans to attend. There can be no

benefit of such a meeting at a time when we see Israel banning the Palestinians from trading with the Arab World, imposing occupation on them, and representing the Arab inhabitants under Israel's rule, he said. The writer referred to the Arab economic meetings, plans for an Arab common market and bilateral accords among the Arab states on promoting economic cooperation as the best means for protecting and promoting the Arab national economy.

Writing about Iraq, Marwan Hazine of Arab Al Yawm said a ray of hope for an end to the sufferings of the Iraqi people is in the offing now that Syria and Iraq have decided to mend fences and start close cooperation in trade and economic fields. Hazine said Damascus and Baghdad have finally decided to close ranks in light of Turkey's constant threats to the two Arab countries, threats from Israel and the U.S.'s foreign ambitions in Arab territory. He said these dangers should also encourage the Arab Gulf countries towards transcending their differences with Iraq and ending the embargo which has ruined the Iraqi nation and impoverished its people. Syria and Iraq are not the only two Arab countries exposed to threats and U.S.-Israeli domination, therefore all efforts should be made to reconcile Arab states and secure backing for a Syrian-Iraqi rapprochement to fend off the dangers posed to the nation, Hazine said.

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'Lifelong learning' vital to jobless battle, OECD says OECD ministers call for special initiative on youth unemployment

PARIS (AFP) — Labour ministers of the industrialised countries have called for a "special initiative" to tackle the problem of high youth unemployment.

"Ministers were particularly concerned about persistently high levels of youth unemployment in many OECD countries," the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said in a communique after a two-day meeting of labour ministers here.

"It is vital to reverse this situation for reasons of social cohesion and equity and because young people represent an investment for the future," the statement said.

"Ministers recommended that a specific initiative focusing on youth unemployment should be developed" and asked the OECD to attach high priority to identifying the most effective policies for governments to combat the problem.

The OECD meeting agreed on three "promising avenues for action" to combat unemployment: improving work and training incentives for the low-paid and unskilled jobless; active policies to prevent people drifting into long-term unemployment and "lifelong learning" to keep pace with a rapidly-changing world, the statement said.

Workers and employers need to play an active role in finding "economically viable and socially acceptable solutions to the challenges of globalisation," as lower unemployment and more opportunities to move out of low-paid jobs would aid popular support for the global economy and technological change, it added.

The Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD welcomed the fact that "governments now recognise that low pay, growing poverty and insecurity of workers are not a solution to unemployment but part of the same problem."

The ministers also expressed concern about rising unemployment among older men and the "modest progress" in

improving job prospects for women, saying that "leaving these skill potentials unused does not bode well for coping with the future challenges, especially that of ageing populations."

Each country needs its own strategy of macro- and micro-economic policies to tackle the unemployment problem, including structural reforms to translate economic growth into rising employment, the statement said.

While some countries have made good progress in structural reforms and have reaped the benefit of higher employment, others have made slow progress, notably due to concern that greater labour and product market flexibility "will threaten social cohesion by leading to growing earnings inequality and poverty."

The OECD has long expressed concern that lack of labour market flexibility in the European Union (EU), notably in France and Germany, is hampering efforts to bring down unemployment.

The International Monetary Fund warned last month that lack of labour market reform is the only real threat to a successful launch of the single EU currency.

For the low-paid and unskilled jobless, the OECD ministers said the first priority is to find jobs for the unskilled by improving their employability, but a lifelong learning programme should also be available to enable them to improve their skills and not be permanently trapped in low-paid jobs.

Not enough evidence is available on the best policy mix to achieve this, and the ministers "encouraged the OECD to assign a high priority to work in this area."

The meeting, the first OECD labour ministers' meeting in five years, proposed that OECD labour and education ministers meet together "to assess the successes and failures of past efforts to coordinate labour market and education and training policies" and develop mechanisms for future

cooperation. The statement gave no suggested date for such a meeting.

OECD labour ministers said here Wednesday that industrialised countries need to overhaul their education systems to offer training between school and retirement to reduce youth unemployment and cope with an ageing population.

"Most countries in the Western world experience smaller and smaller youth generations and there is a real risk that we will be facing the problem of shortage of labour in the not too distant future," Danish Labour Minister Jytte Andersen told the conference.

"So measures must be taken — mainly in relation to young persons — but also, to a wide extent, in relation to older persons," she said.

The conference discussed ways to reduce a more than 10 per cent jobless rate in OECD countries, but particularly how to resolve the current problem of youth unemployment and how to equip the workforce to meet the future needs of employers in a rapidly-changing world with an ageing population.

The industrialised world needed to harness the expertise of older workers to improve training, as well as instilling a system where training throughout one's working life is seen as the norm, EU representative Padraig Flynn told reporters.

Too many young people dropped out of school and went into long-term unemployment, either because there was no training available or because there was no motivation to take it up, Mr. Flynn said.

Difficult decisions "political courage" would have to be taken if the problem were to be resolved, Mr. Flynn warned.

He also stressed the need to link any such measures "to the realities of working life."

People who have never had a job or unemployed for a long time need not only training for a particular job, but also the chance to learn "more

basic things, such as getting out of bed in the morning, being punctual, solving the tasks they are presented with," Ms. Andersen said.

But such a shakeup of the education and training system will require funding to enable adults with family responsibilities, for example, to return to education without total loss of income.

"A lot of partners are needed in these initiatives" to engage school-leavers in the world of work and allow for training during a person's working life, U.S. Labour Secretary Alexis Herman told AFP.

Not only the federal government but local authorities, the business community and non-profit organisations are involved in such programmes in the United States, she said.

She also stressed the importance of convincing children in school that "what you learn impacts what you earn," noting that the U.S. government plans to lengthen the basic education requirement from 12 years to 14.

"One of the good things about this meeting" was that it allowed an exchange of views on how to move away from traditional resources and traditional funding to cope with the urgent need for lifelong learning programmes, she said.

Some countries already seek to motivate the jobless by obliging them to take either an appropriate job offer or training to qualify for state benefits, such as Sweden or Denmark.

South Korean Labour Minister Ki-Ho Lee said that governments must address the problem both of youth unemployment and the people who lose their jobs late in their careers, noting that "aged workers are more likely to slip into long-term unemployment once unemployed."

His country is planning a system where a worker's training and education throughout his life would be recorded as a continuous whole, taking account of education, training and job experience.

German and European traders show interest in Jordanian produce

BONN (Petra) — Jordan has taken part in an international food and beverage fair in the German city of Cologne where it displayed high quality agricultural vegetables and fruits.

Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) Director General Salem Lawzi, who led the Jordanian delegation to the fair, said Jordan achieved major success as numerous German and other European firms have concluded deals for the purchase of Jordanian agricultural products.

The fair presented a good opportunity for Jordanian exporters to meet foreign

importers and merchants and discuss future business relations with them, he said.

Dr. Lawzi commended the efforts of Jordan's ambassador to Germany, Hussein Hamami, and his embassy staff for the facilities they offered to the delegation and the Jordanian private sector that enabled them to achieve success.

Raed Hattar, head of AMO's research department said that the products displayed by the Jordanian delegation reflected the country's ability to compete in foreign markets.

Cabinet to review proposals today for privatisation of JTC

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Cabinet will review Saturday the recommendations of the Higher Ministerial Privatisation Committee on the final measures to privatise the Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC), Minister of Public Works and Housing and Acting Minister of Transport and Telecommunications Nassir Lawzi told Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times Friday.

Mr. Lawzi said that some significant recommendations were taken during the long session of the Higher Ministerial Privatisation Committee which was held

last Wednesday. The minister added that among the recommendations were raising the participation of the strategic partner from 26 per cent to 40 per cent and issuing licences to the JTC to provide mobile services.

He noted that the Cabinet is expected to approve these recommendations Saturday and that they will be effective as of the beginning of next month.

Mr. Lawzi said that technical committees were formed to ensure the selling of the government shares of the JTC.

Egypt tightens ban on products made in Israeli settlements

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Egypt has tightened measures designed to stop the importation of goods made in Jewish settlements on Israeli-occupied Arab land, Israel Television has reported.

The report said Israeli exporters are now obliged to obtain a certificate from the Egyptian embassy in Tel Aviv proving that their products have not been manufactured in the West

Bank, Gaza Strip or the Golan Heights.

Despite the signing of a peace treaty in 1979, relations between Egypt and Israel have remained cold.

Relations have further deteriorated since right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took office in June last year on a hardline, pro-settlement platform and froze the peace process.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES:

(March 21 to April 19) Listen carefully to suggestions made today by friends. Make note of your ambitions, and also of routines which need improvement. Later this evening will be good for you to seek out the advice of knowledgeable people.

TAURUS:

(April 20 to May 20) If someone nearby has good financial experience today, ask for and follow this person's advice. Find more modern means of advancing in business, so that you can gain the respect and admiration of a bigwig.

GEMINI:

(May 21 to June 21) Enjoy a gathering of close friends tonight, and make plans for get-togethers in the days ahead. These can be very interesting and profitable to you and fellow associates, so make every effort to complete some new project.

MOON CHILDREN:

(June 22 to July 21) Be with the one you love all day today, and you will both find much happiness. Avoid associating with strangers you know nothing about or you discover that you are in a difficult situation which won't be pleasant.

LEO:

(July 22 to August 21) This is a fine day today for being gregarious and enjoying the company of your best friends. The best method to gain your wishes is to state them clearly in such a manner that knowledgeable people can be of assistance.

VIRGO:

(August 22 to September 22) Get out socially today, perhaps to a civic function, and meet with persons who may be able to assist you materially in the days ahead. Later this evening will be a good time to go out on the town with close friends.

LIBRA:

(September 23 to October 22) If you've been thinking about a short trip with a close friend, this is a good day today to plan it. A new situation will arise later this evening which will benefit you greatly, so keep an eye on the situation.

SCORPIO:

(October 23 to November 21) This is an ideal day today to get your responsibilities organised so you can handle them more easily. Invite some good friends in for dinner and make it an evening which they will not long forget about in the days ahead.

SAGITTARIUS:

(November 22 to December 21) Be alert to new opportunities in the business world which will bring you success in the days ahead. This is also a good time to make new arrangements or to revise any old ones which have been in consideration.

CAPRICORN:

(December 22 to January 20) A quiet discussion with a fellow associate can reveal much information which you were not aware of. Although it's good day to relax, don't neglect your duties so that you can gain the recognition of a bigwig.

AQUARIUS:

(January 21 to February 19) You are highly creative today, and you can use this ability to make your ideas work more successfully. Enjoy the company of your mate later this evening and thereby you can have a romantic time together.

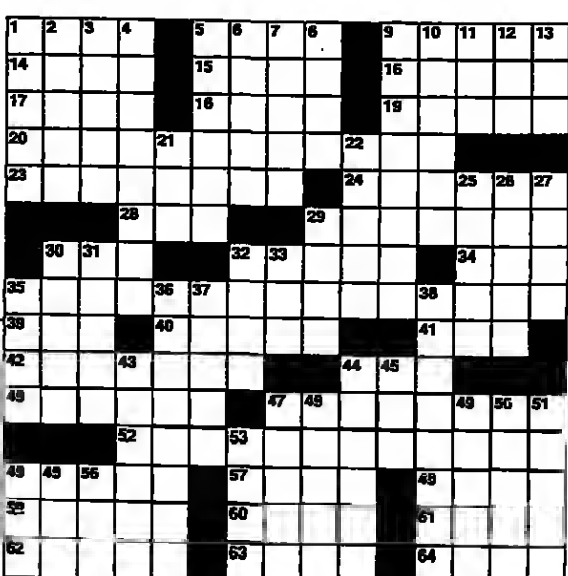
PISCES:

(February 20 to March 20) This is a fine day today to improve your relationship with your family. This would also be a good time to entertain guests or to have a picnic, so make plans to get together and have a wonderful time.

Birthstone of October: Opal — Tourmaline

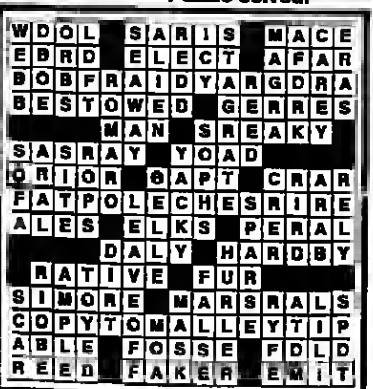
THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- 1 Flery gemstone
 - 5 Cod's relative
 - 9 Violin's sound opening
 - 14 Valley of the grapes
 - 15 "Diary of — Housewife"
 - 16 Did garden work
 - 17 Mine products
 - 18 Wolf
 - 19 Actor Davis
 - 20 Governors
 - 23 Machine part
 - 24 1995 merger group
 - 28 Alliance letters
 - 29 Side by side
 - 30 TV attachment
 - 32 San —, CA
 - 34 Alphabetical trio
 - 35 Roth satire
 - 39 Flange
 - 40 Runner-up
 - 41 — Bay, Japan
 - 42 Certain national anthem
 - 44 — and downs
 - 46 Guatemala's neighbor
 - 47 Backs down
 - 52 State capital
 - 54 Actress Black
 - 57 Practice boxing
 - 58 Dam it
 - 59 Without help
 - 60 Ann or Nan
 - 61 Baseball's speaker
 - 62 Deviated, nautilically
 - 63 Fabric colorer
 - 64 Sensible



by Thomas W. Schler

Puzzle solved:



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- DOWN
- 1 Switch type
 - 2 Not written
 - 3 Silly trick
 - 4 Amen, sometimes
 - 5 Headlights?
 - 6 Soap plant
 - 7 Afghan capital
 - 8 Ancient country
 - 9 Ribbons and ruffles
 - 10 Quarell
 - 11 Gives permission
 - 12 Wreath
 - 13 Netherlands commune
 - 21 Half a dance?
 - 22 Tower of —
 - 25 Auto parts, for add-on
 - 26 Point in question
 - 27 Ed and Mel
 - 29 Fabric ending
 - 30 Express opinions
 - 31 Hard resin
 - 32 Tableland
 - 33 Expert
 - 35 Mass
 - 36 Published far
 - 37 Ed and wide
 - 38 Alpine song
 - 39 Separates
 - 40 Incorrectly
 - 43 Ancient creed
 - 44 Loan shark
 - 45 Footlike part
 - 47 Gas gauge
 - 48 Fall off
 - 49 Scarlett —
 - 50 Belong
 - 51 "All That Jazz" director
 - 53 Played for a sucker
 - 54 After Jay
 - 55 Chicken — king
 - 56 Line

Peanuts



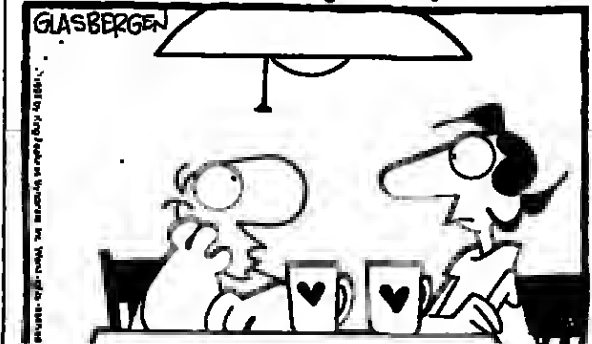
Andy Capp



Mutt'n Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I've been bored to sweat, bored to drool, even bored to excessive earwax. But I've never actually been bored to tears."

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TREEB

NOJAB

TUSDIP

MYGLAB

Print answer here: HER

Yesterday's Jumbles: WHISK FINIS HALVEO SYMBOL.

Answer: Throwing a plate in anger resulted in this A "DISH-MISSILE"

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argenti

He's really cute. I hope there are others like him.

WHAT SHE HOPED TO FIND ON THE CRUISE SHIP.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Commodity	Unit	Price
Coffee (Arabica)	100 lbs	1.17
Cocoa (1st)	100 lbs	1.00
Sugar (1st)	100 lbs	2.04
Wheat (1st)	100 lbs	1.40
Soybeans	100 lbs	24.64
Tea (1st)	100 lbs	1.94
Barley (1st)	100 lbs	1.00
Rice (1st)	100 lbs	4.20

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Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Securities Commission gives initial approval to 14 companies to raise capital through offering shares or capitalisation of reserves, premiums

**** THE BOARD** of the Securities Commission has given its preliminary approval for a number of companies to increase their capital either through public or private subscription, capitalisation of voluntary or special reserves or capitalisation of retained earnings or premiums of insurance.

The initial approval requires the companies to provide the commission with insurance prospects and all documents and statements related to raising the capital and to payment of required fees.

The approvals were given to the following companies:

The Arab Jordan Investment Bank, The Jordan Electric Power Co., The Arab Food and Medical Appliances Co., The National Cable and Wire Manufacturing Co., The Jordan Islamic Bank for Finance and Investment, The Universal Modern Industries Co., The Arab Banking Corporation (Jordan), The Zira Investment Co., The Jordan Kuwait Bank, The General Investment Co., The Arabian Seas Insurance Co., The Philadelphia Insurance Co., The Sanctuary Investment Group, and The Jordan Press and Publishing / Ad-Dustour.

went into effect Thursday following the issuance of regulations that organise the issuance of securities at the primary market and their registration at the Security Commission.

The regulations, announced by Securities Commission President Michel Marto last week, covered the following areas:

- 1) Pricing securities which, in the past, was handled by an issuance committee. By abolishing the committee, the new regulations permit issues of securities can fix the prices in any way they deem suitable.
- 2) Floating securities and the means for such floating whether through public or private subscription.
- 3) Allocating minimum subscription equally for all subscribers with the minimum to be between 50 to 250 shares.
- 4) Allowing capitalisation of insurance premiums for public shareholding companies as a way to increase capital.

Mr. Marto said further regulations will be issued in due course including areas of disclosure, organising operations of financial professionals related to the capital market and underwriters (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 17/10/97 10:52									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.7717	0.6189	1.4750	120.18	1.3858	1728.17	1.9960	5.9405	
DE Mark	0.5844	1.0000	0.6325	67.81	0.7815	975.51	1.7288	2.4525	
GB Sterling	1.6158	2.8628	1.0000	194.70	2.2392	2783.98	3.2251	9.5887	
CH Franc	0.6780	120.03	0.4182	81.43	0.9388	1171.52	134.28	4.0241	
JP Yen	0.0083	1.4736	0.5146	1.2268	1.1526	14.38	168.02	4.8408	
CA Dollar	0.7215	1.2860	0.6671	1.3955	1.15	1247.48	1.4257	5.2575	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0241	0.3576	0.0853	1.4402	0.8010	11.54	3.4338	
Al. Guider	0.5010	88.72	0.3088	73.88	0.6438	1053.80	2.2167	2.2167	
FR Franc	0.1683	0.2981	0.1041	24.8187	0.2332	33.59	33.5900		

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.7717	0.6189	1.4750	120.18	1.3858	1728.17	1.9960	5.9405	
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	5.2972	4.6325	5.1415	0.4294	5.1478	2170.30	7.094	
Saudi Riyal	0.2668	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.0811	0.98	408.82	0.9060	
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	0.9488	8.88	0.8084	8.76	4076.82	0.9132	
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	0.1030	0.9303	0.0835	1.01	422.23	0.9335	
Kuwait Dinar	2.2895	2.3289	1.2401	1.137	0.9911	0.0828	418.48	0.9232	
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	0.1021	0.1028	0.9911	0.0828	418.48	0.9232	
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4896	2.4401	0.2453	2.3888	1.1928	2.3888	2.2167	
Egyptian	0.2343	0.2084	1.1037	0.1109	1.0713	0.0895	1.0808	452.32	


Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	PTA
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.1888	0.1005	0.97	0.0811	0.98	408.82	0.9060	
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.1928	0.1021	0.1028	0.9911	0.0828	418.48	0.9232	
KW Dinar	2.2895	2.3289	1.2401	1.137	0.9911	0.0828	418.48	0.9232	
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.4784	0.2453	2.3888	1.1928	2.3888	2.2167	2.2167	
CY Pound	1.9088	3.382	1.181	2.8156				225.412	

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	PTA
USD	5.50	5.65	5.77	5.84	5.87				
GBP	7.09	7.25	7.37	7.43	7.49				
DEM	0.50	0.50	0.53	0.48	0.47				
JPY	3.37	3.58	3.75	3.81	3.86				
FRF	3.48	3.65	3.80	3.85	3.95				
CHF	1.86	1.85	1.88	1.89	1.89				
ITL	8.63	8.38	8.10	8.81	8.80				

Energy									
Commodity	Unit	Spot	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	12 Months	YTD	
Coffee (c/lb)	161.17								
Cocoa (c/lb)	1888								
Sugar (c/lb)	286.5								
Wheat (c/lb)	140								
Soya (c/lb)	24.84								
Tea (c/lb)	154								
Barley (c/lb)	0								
Rice (c/lb)	420								

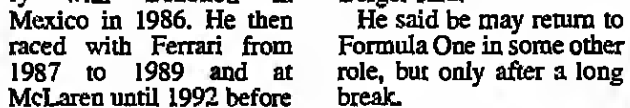
JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	YEN	FRF	ITL	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
DE Mark	1.4124	1.4124							
FR Franc	0.4051	0.4071							
IT Lira	0.0006	0.0006							
NL Guider	0.3598	0.3614							
PTA	0.4142	0.4164							

Source: Central Bank of Jordan

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET														
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN														
TELEPHONE: 507171 / 507173														
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (11/10/1997 - 15/10/1997)														
WEEKLY REPORT														
														
DURING THE LAST 5 WEEKS														
RIGH	LOW	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE TURNOVER	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
141.000	312.000	ARAB BANK	15.1	1.22	25	1180	589240	355.80	335.00	328.00	329.00	-6.50	325.881	0.927
1.980	1.920	JOR. NATIONAL BANK	-	0.00	54	56400	128257	1.94	1.94	1.89	1.89	-0.05	1.927	1.59
5.000	4.900	CALSO AMMAN BANK	10.3	3.00	3	2350	11873	5.50	5.50	5.00	5.00	-0.10	4.947	0.24
1.110	1.110	WIG. EAST JOR. BK.	10.2	0.00	52	102377	213077	1.11	1.17	1.12	1.12	+0.01	1.165	1.823
2.000	2.100	TRUSTEES INV. BK.	10.2	0.00	89	30475	101782	2.55	2.60	2.54	2.54	-0.03	2.576	3.59
5.000	4.820	JOR. INVESTMENT BK.	14.9	3.90	45	130985	552301	4.55	5.58	5.98	5.98	+0.05	5.580	5.25
2.200	2.110	JOR. INVESTMENT BANK	11.1	0.00	11	801	2915	5.19	5.16	5.12	5.12	-0.03	5.140	0.08
1.870	1.750	JOR. GULF BANK	5.7	0.00	13	3330	2636	1.75	1.75	1.70	1.70	-0.05	1.753	0.17
3.900	3.520	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.8	3.50	57	11077	50478	3.67	3.70	3.65	3.65	-0.03	3.672	0.76
1.250	1.200	UNION BK. INV. INV.	17.1	0.00	2	500	588	1.25	1.22	1.22	1.22	-0.01	1.220	0.02
3.420	3.480	JOR. INV. INV. INV.	24.9	0.00	27	55558	20173	3.58	3.90	3.70	3.70	-0.20	3.612	0.55
1.950	1.910	WIT. AL-BALAD (BATHMA)	16	15.50	10	2890	2520	1.92	1.91	1.90	1.90	-0.01	1.900	1.50
4.250	3.650	ARAB BANKING CO.	18.1	0.00	8	1880	7852	3.65	3.75	3.70	3.70	-0.10	3.734	0.13
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World Series matches young and old

Berger, always with a ready smile and who likes



His record speaks for itself. Hershisier is 8-1 in

his former club by beating Baltimore. Bonilla ripped Orioles manager Davey Johnson after his release in

likely start in game two Sunday against either rookie Jarret Wright or Chad Ogea.

Armstrong returns to racing in '98

WASHINGTON (AFP) — American cyclist Lance Armstrong signed with the U.S. Postal Service team Thursday, just a little more than one year after learning that he suffered from testicular cancer. "I'm happy to be riding for a U.S. team again," said Armstrong, 26, who signed a one-year deal with U.S. Postal Service. "I plan to return in early 1998, but I'm not sure which race will be the first." Racing anywhere will be a victory for Armstrong, who was given only a 50 per cent chance to live last year by doctors treating the cancer which was discovered in his testicles, but later spread throughout his body. Following the diagnosis on October 9 of last year, Armstrong endured extensive chemotherapy and underwent brain surgery. Now his cancer is in remission. Armstrong split with French team Cofidis earlier this month. He never rode for the team, which he joined shortly before he was diagnosed with cancer.

Deportivo La Coruna coach sacked

MADRID (AFP) — Deportivo La Coruna's Brazilian coach Carlos Alberto Silva was sacked on Thursday evening by club president Augusto Cesar Lendoiro. And Lendoiro has also given an ultimatum to Brazilian World Cup star Bebeto. Should striker Bebeto not arrive by Monday night, Lendoiro will not allow him to play at the club, Deportivo, who are only 15th in the Spanish championship with six points in six matches, are already out of the UEFA Cup and lost 3-1 at home on Wednesday to bottom club Real Valladolid. It was Valladolid's first points of the season. Sources close to the club believe Brazil's Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, the Paraguay national coach, or Portugal coach Artur Jorge, are possible replacements for Silva, the fourth Spanish first division coach to be axed this season. Silva's assistant Jose Manuel Corral has taken over a caretaker role at the club who have their next match at Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

All-British plan for League Cup

LONDON (AFP) — English and Scottish sides could face each other in next season's League Cup in a bid to give a much-needed boost to the competition on either side of the border. The Football League feel that after the success of Liverpool's UEFA Cup tie with Celtic, making the competition an all-British affair could revive the big clubs' flagging interest. After a week when Arsenal and Manchester United fielded drastically weakened sides, League chairman David Sheepshanks feels it is time to act. Such a revamped cup could strengthen the League's hand in discussions with UEFA to restore the competition's European place. Sheepshanks said: "I think now is a good time to seriously discuss a British Cup. "It has been raised several times before and always rejected. But now, given the excitement recently generated by the Liverpool-Celtic ties, perhaps some form of involvement between Scottish and English clubs should be considered."

Saints break the bank for Hirst

SOUTHAMPTON (AFP) — Southampton splashed out a club-record transfer fee of two million pounds (\$3.2 million) to sign David Hirst from Premiership rivals Sheffield Wednesday on Friday. Former England striker Hirst is expected to make his debut against Blackburn at Ewood Park on Saturday. The 29-year-old, capped three times, passed a medical on Thursday night and will add vital firepower to the struggling Saints. He arrives with a proven goalscoring record at Hillsborough — 128 goals in 309 appearances.

Courier out of Stuttgart tourney

STUTTGART (AFP) — Former World No.1 Jim Courier has pulled out of the ATP tournament which begins here on Monday, the organizers announced on Friday. An injury has forced the American to miss the \$2.3-million event.

Scifo set to miss UEFA Cup game

BRUSSELS (AFP)— Injured playmaker Enzo Scifo is expected to miss Anderlecht's UEFA Cup second round, first leg match at Germany's Schalke 04 on Tuesday. A hip injury is set to also keep the Belgian international out of the domestic championship match at Ekeren on Saturday.

Madar back in training

LA CORUNA, Spain (AFP) — France's Michael Madar is due to restart training at Deportivo La Coruna after more than two months enforced exile, Spanish press reported on Friday. The former Monaco striker has rejoined his teammates after a row with coach Carlos Alberto Silva at the beginning of August put him on to the sidelines. Silva wanted to punish the 29-year-old Frenchman, who had a confrontation with one of his teammates during a training session. Silva, however, was sacked on Thursday evening by club president Augusto Cesar Landeiro.

Brazil top FIFA rankings

ZURICH (AFP) — Following are the FIFA world football rankings (Ranking end of 1996 in brackets):

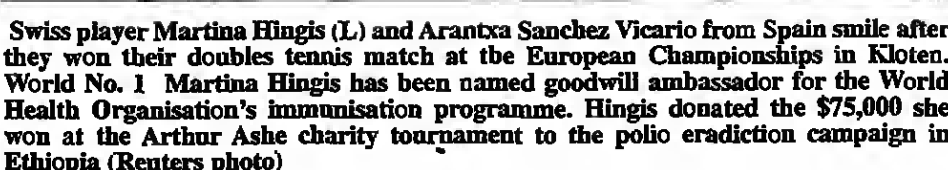
1 Brazil (1)	72.15	points
2 Spain (8)	65.20	
3 Germany (2)	63.03	
4 Czech Republic (5)	61.97	
5 Romania (16)	61.87	
6 Denmark (6)	60.85	
7 England (12)	60.66	
8 Holland (9)	60.59	
9 Russia (7)	60.01	
10 Mexico (11)	59.94	
11 Colombia (4)	59.51	
12 Norway (14)	59.45	
13 Argentina (22)	58.09	
14 France (3)	57.88	
15 Morocco (27)	57.65	
16 Italy (10)	57.56	
17 Sweden (17)	57.18	
18 Bulgaria (15)	56.76	
19 Zambia (20)	56.07	
20 Japan (21)	56.00	
21 Portugal (13)	55.45	
22 Bolivia (39)	55.27	
23 Austria (34)	55.11	
24 Tunisia (23)	55.07	
25 Scotland (29)	54.38	
26 South Africa (19)	53.75	
27 Chile (26)	53.62	
28 Paraguay (38)	53.55	
29 Croatia (24)	53.39	
30 Slovakia (30)	53.11	

Injuries force Hübler, Zvereva out

ZURICH, Switzerland (AFP) — Injuries forced German Anke Huber and Natasha Zvereva of Belarus out of their second-round matches in the WTA Tour event here Thursday.

American Venus Williams got a walkover into the quarter-finals when sixth-seeded Huber withdrew with a back injury, while fourth-seeded American Lindsay Davenport also advanced to the last eight when a right shoulder injury forced Zvereva out in the second set of their contest.

Davenport was leading 6-4, 2-2 at the time. Another American, Lisa Raymond, surprised fifth-seeded South African Amanda Coetzer



and will play top-seeded Swiss teenager Martina Hingis in the quarters.

Raymond triumphed 7-5, 6-3 and will meet Hingis in

a repeat of last week's final in Filderstadt, Germany.

Hingis won in straight sets on Sunday. Nathalie Tauziat

of France also advanced Thursday with a 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/3) win over Dominique van Roost of Belgium.

0-5 and will meet Filings in On Sunday, Naamant lauziat Belgium.

Egyptian Open

Jansher Khan gets revenge as he ousts Nicol in semis

Jessica Lange & Halle Berry ... in

Tom Cruise ... in

Julia Roberts ... in

CONCORD -1-

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TODAY AT	<div>CINEMA TEL: 634144</div> <div>PHILADELPHIA "1"</div> <div>Jessica Lange & Halle Berry ... in</div> <div>LOSING ISAIAH</div> <div>Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30</div>	<div>CINEMA TEL: 634144</div> <div>PHILADELPHIA "2"</div> <div>Tom Cruise ... in</div> <div>MISSION IMPOSSIBLE</div> <div>Sbows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30</div>	<div>CINEMA TEL: 699238</div> <div>PLAZA</div> <div>Julia Roberts ... in</div> <div>MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING</div> <div>Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30</div>	<div>CINEMA TEL: 677430</div> <div>CONCORD</div> <div>CONCORD "1"</div> <div>Geena Davis & Samuel Jackson ... in</div> <div>THE LONG KISS GOOD NIGHT</div> <div>(12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30)</div> <div>CONCORD "2"</div> <div>FAIR GAME</div> <div>Shows: 3:30, 6:00 only</div>	<div>CINEMA TEL: 079 33430</div> <div>GALLERIA 1</div> <div>ABDOUN</div> <div>Will Smith & Tommy Lee Jones ... in</div> <div>MEN IN BLACK</div> <div>Sbows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:45</div>	<div>CINEMA TEL: 079 33430</div> <div>GALLERIA 2</div> <div>ABDOUN</div> <div>Tim Allen... in</div> <div>JUNGLE 2 JUNGLE</div> <div>Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30</div>	<div>Hisham Yanes Theatre</div> <div>TEL: 625155</div> <div>Watch out for the new play</div> <div>THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE</div> <div>Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas</div>
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Gunners risking all for Premiership glory

LONDON (AFP) — English Premiership action returns this weekend with Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger hoping that his international stars have recovered from the physical and mental exertions of a draining World Cup week.

No fewer than 11 Gunners were on international duty and Wenger was taking no chances for the Premiership leaders' trip to Crystal Palace on Saturday when he rested his stars in Tuesday's League Cup clash with Birmingham.

Following Arsenal's exit from the UEFA Cup last month, the Frenchman has made no attempt to disguise his aim of bringing the league title back to Highbury for the first time since 1991 — and is even prepared to risk expulsion from the League Cup to achieve his ambition.

He said: "My only interest is to do the right thing for Arsenal and that means resting my international players."

One player who will definitely be missing from the clash with London rivals Palace is injured Frenchman Emmanuel Petit, who has been in sparkling form at the heart of Arsenal's midfield since his \$5.5 million move from AS Monaco in the close season.

But Wenger is hoping that his other international stars, including England trio Ian Wright, Tony Adams and David Seaman plus Dutch stars Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars will have recovered from the World Cup exploits.

Reigning champions Manchester United, currently one point behind Arsenal, face a difficult trip to high-flying Derby who were one of only two teams to beat United in the league at Old Trafford last season.

Jim Smith's Derby, along with fourth-placed Leicester, have been the surprise of the season and lie sixth going into Saturday's sell-out clash at Pride Park, their state-of-the-art new stadium.

Eight United players were involved in England's stirring 0-0 draw against Italy in Rome which clinched qualification for the 1998 finals, but none of them reported anything worse than a slight knock on their return.

Elsewhere, Liverpool will be hoping to compound the problems of arch rivals Everton when the two sides clash in the Merseyside derby at Goodison Park.

Another clash of the heavyweights will take place at Elland Road where George Graham's Leeds, the only team to beat Manchester United this season, entertain Kenny Dalglish's Newcastle.

There will be little love lost at Stamford Bridge where fifth-placed Chelsea face fourth-placed Leicester in what is sure to be an explosive encounter after last season's FA Cup clash at Stamford Bridge.



Boris Becker of Germany plays a return during his match against Jonathan Stark of the U.S. at the Marlboro Championships '97 in Hong Kong, October 17. Becker won the match 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Henman crashes out in Lyon

LYON (AFP) — British No. 2 and eighth seed Tim Henman crashed out of the \$750,000 ATP Tour event here Thursday, losing 3-6, 4-6 in barely an hour to Germany's Marc-Kevin Goellner.

The 23-year-old Henman, who has secured two Tour wins on the circuit this season while also reaching two finals, appeared curiously out of sorts against Goellner, six foot five and playing in his trademark back to front baseball cap.

A bemused Henman found himself up against a man on the top of his game with the big German serving superbly throughout, wrapping up the opening set with ease with a break in the sixth game before establishing a 4-2 lead in the second against his bemused opponent by breaking for 2-1.

It was only then that Henman, ranked 18 in the world and averaging more than eight aces per match on the circuit this season, finally managed his first of the evening to get back to 4-3.

But the German, ranked just 61 on the ATP computer, closed out the Wimbledon quarter-finalist again to serve out for the match at 5-4.

After going 30-0 behind, Henman pulled off a brilliant crosscourt return to claw his way back to 30-15 but then netted after scrambling across for a Goellner forehand hit short.

On the resulting match point, the German suddenly betrayed a hint of nervousness as he double faulted for the third time.

But having faulted again, he then hammered a superb stooping double-fisted return down the line to kill off any hope Henman had of making a last ditch recovery against the man he beat in Basel just two weeks ago.

It was a bitter blow for Tim Henman, who made the semi-finals here last year and who had fully expected at least to repeat that showing this time round instead of failing even to reach the quarters.

Second-seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia earlier beat Dutchman Fennon Wieber 6-3, 6-4 and will now play Goellner.

Fabrice Santoro of France just edged big Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands 2-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) in a thrilling encounter which had the crowd on their feet as the Frenchman retrieved an apparent lost cause.

Sixth-seeded former Wimbledon champion Krajicek raced through the first set playing brilliant tennis but came unstuck thereafter as Santoro levelled with a brilliant return down the line at full stretch.

And the Frenchman called on his last reserves of energy to reach the last eight, moving crucially to 5-4 in the final set tiebreak as he just managed to get back an overhead Krajicek effort at full stretch before wrapping it up when the exhausted Dutchman scuffed a return into the net.

Santoro will next meet Spaniard Felix Mantilla in the quarters. In other matches, Cedric Pioline of France ended the surprise run of his compatriot Arnaud Clement, winning 6-2, 6-2 against the

man who ousted top-seeded Australian Patrick Rafter in the first round.

Pioline will now face seventh-seeded Australian Mark Philippoussis, who downed American Richey Reneberg 4-6, 7-6, 6-4.

Fifth-seed Thomas Enqvist of Sweden defeated American Todd Martin 7-5, 6-3 and will now play German prospect Tommy Haas, a 6-2, 6-3 winner against Spaniard Julian Alonso.

Henman said later: "My opponent played very well and didn't give me a chance on his service. He put me under pressure."

"I didn't serve as well as usual and I lost two of my service games on double faults. But that's not to take anything away from Goellner."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMAR HIRSCH

ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

410652 ♠K1052 ♣QJ8763

The bidding has proceeded:

	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣			1♣	
2♣			2♣	
3♣			3♣	
4♣			4♣	

What do you bid now?

A - You have no interest beyond playing in five clubs, and the way to describe a weak hand with great support for partner's second suit is by bidding five clubs right now. That denies the ability to cue-bid. A raise to four clubs is actually a stronger bid. Since partner's jump shift was a game force, four clubs would invite a cue-bidding sequence.

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

452 ♠A853 ♣AQ102 ♢AQ

The bidding has proceeded:

	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣			1♣	
2♣			2♣	
3♣			3♣	
4♣			4♣	

What do you bid now?

A - You are close to a jump to game, but you do have a six-loser hand. We prefer a game try to give partner the chance to wriggle off the hook if the raise was based more on courtesy than substance. Our choice would be three diamonds, even though we really don't need "help" in the suit. Partner may cooperate with good trumps, and that could be enough.

Q. 3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

4104 ♠97632 ♣A95 ♢AQ7

The bidding has proceeded:

	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣			1♣	
2♣			2♣	
3♣			3♣	
4♣			4♣	

What do you bid now?

A - A tough hand. You have too much to pass, but no good bid. We would opt for one no trump as the least of evils. Your hand is balanced, you are maximum in terms of point count and have an almost

sure, if slow, heart stopper.

Q. 4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

446 ♠AKJ75 ♣Q1065 ♢Q5

The bidding has proceeded:

	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣			1♣	
2♣			2♣	
3♣			3♣	
4♣			4♣	

What do you bid now?

A - It is inconceivable that partner made a high reverse without two aces, but it is easy to construct a hand where the king of diamonds is missing. We would bid five no trump, the Grand Slam Force, asking partner to bid seven diamonds with the ace-king.

Q. 5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

4K5 ♠AJ76 ♣A ♢AQ843

Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one club. What action do you take?

A - One bridge maxim which has our whole-hearted endorsement is: When your opponent has opened in your best suit, pass to see how the auction develops. With no known source of tricks and unbalanced distribution, a one-no-trump overall would be foolhardy, as would one heart on a poor four-card suit.

Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

4AJ ♠85 ♣QJ103 ♢AKQJ5

The bidding has proceeded:

	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♣			1♣	
2♣			2♣	
3♣			3♣	
4♣			4♣	

What do you bid now?

A - What an annoying hand. No jump in a minor will do justice to your tremendous playing strength, but a jump shift to two spades could spell disaster should partner have four cards in the suit. All in all, make the underbid of three diamonds and hope for the best.

Qomoq wins Pepsi Speed Test

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The season's top speed test competitor Yanal Qomoq Friday took first place after registering best time of 02:17.45 minutes in his Renault 5 Turbo at the Pepsi Speed Test — the 7th and last speed test of the 1997 season — at the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ).

With this precious win Qomoq moved to second place in the 1997 speed tests championships standings with 160 points.

Reigning Jordan Drivers Open Champion Ahmad Daoud remained at the top of the list with 168 points after taking second place with 02:20.34 in a Renault 5 GT Turbo.

Yasser Jarrar came third in the list and in the speed test with 156 points and 02:20.49 in his Renault 5 GT

Turbo.

A heated competition was evident between Qomoq and rivals Daoud and Jarrar especially after Jarrar's successful attempt in registering best time in the first round.

In the second round it was apparent that Qomoq would not hold on and might lose his title as speed test champion.

However, Qomoq performed a wonderful round and beat Jarrar's time with a 3-second difference.

Jarrar could not continue the race after he surprisingly hit the pavement and lost the chance to compete for the third round.

Daoud registered a better time in the second round and withdrew from competition in the third special round.

With Daoud's withdrawal it became clear that Qomoq would be the speed test champion.

Twenty participants and only two women drivers took part in the event.

Abeer Batikhi in a Hyundai Accent registered 02:45.95 and Maya Mufti in a Mitsubishi Colt clocked 02:45.99.

The event consisted of two rounds in addition to a third round for the top ten who were given another chance to improve their timing.

The speed test displays the drivers' skills in manoeuvring, speed and safety.

Prizes were handed to the winners in a special ceremony at RACJ premises.

The auto sports season still has three more events to go — the 4X4 Rally, a rally tour and a special rally to conclude this year's activities.

NFL preview

Broncos bid to remain unbeaten

OAKLAND, California (AFP) — The Denver Broncos will try to set a club record for the best start for a season and push the Oakland Raiders further into the cellar Sunday as the long-time National Football League antagonists meet.

Denver, 6-0, also won its first six games of the 1996 season before losing to the New York Jets. The Broncos, whose other 6-0 start in team history came in 1977, lead the American Conference West by two games over the Kansas City Chiefs.

Now coming off a bye week, Denver has scored at least 29 points in each of its last five games and has outscored opponents 190-85 thus far.

While Oakland (2-4) has the offence that can go toe-to-toe with the Broncos, whether it can stop them is a different story. The Raiders were thumped by San Diego 25-10 before the bye week and fell into last place in the AFC West.

The Raiders have allowed almost 400 yards per game on defence.

Oakland has allowed 158 points in its six games and at least 17 in every contest.

To make matters worse, the team has been distracted this week by controversy over cornerback Larry Brown's suspension for conduct detrimental to the team.

Brown, who has seen little action since being benched in the second half of the Raiders' 28-27 setback to Kansas City on September 8, claims his coaches and Raiders owner Al Davis conspired to run him off the team.

"They were trying to find something on me," Brown said Wednesday, a day after receiving the four-game suspension. "It was pre-planned. They were waiting in the wings."

Coach Joe Bugel denied



Kansas City Chiefs fullback Kimble Anders is brought down by San Diego Charger Dwayne Harper after a 23-yard pickup in the first quarter in Kansas City (Reuters photo)

the charge. "I don't operate like that as a football coach," Bugel said. "I like my players. I have a very good relationship with them. I don't have vendettas for anybody."

Brown said he and Bugel exchanged words after Brown gave up a reception in practice on Monday.

Brown said the Raiders were waiting for him to

make a mistake. "This was a tactic Al Davis made to get rid of me, and I think it was planned. Bugel said the decision to suspend Brown, the 1996

Super Bowl Most Valuable Player for Dallas, was his. "It was my decision," Bugel said. "I talked to him on Monday afternoon and made a decision. That was it."

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Resigning PNA legislator launches call for reforms

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A Palestinian legislator who resigned to protest at the lack of democracy in self-rule areas went to the press Friday to condemn corruption in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and call for reform.

Haider Abdul Shafi published an open letter to "Palestinian citizens" in the daily newspaper Al Quds to explain the reasons for his resignation so that "the people may know the truth of what is happening."

"I hope that my resignation will be a cause for reform of what has gone wrong and the beginning of a new phase in our national project," he wrote.

He called on the PNA to "put a stop to corruption, perks for officials, and monopolies, respect the rule of law and concentrate on making a democratic transformation."

Mr. Abdul Shafi, a veteran politician from Gaza and a former negotiator for the Palestinians with Israel, has

rejected pressure from his colleagues and the self-rule authority to retract his resignation from the Palestinian Legislative Council, which he announced on Oct. 2.

In the open letter, he accused the PNA of "marginalising the legislative council, ignoring its decisions, and removing it from the political process."

The PNA's policy is "an open violation of the Oslo (self-rule accords)" which created the council and gave it the mandate of "creating laws and overseeing their implementation."

The PNA "has turned its back on the requirements to cooperate (with the council)," he said.

"And I am sorry to say that the president of the council has not acted in a responsible and decisive way to the authority's policy of ignoring the needs of law and constitutional principles," he said.

Since the 88-member council was elected in January 1996, it has passed

numerous bills and recommendations, but Mr. Arafat has yet to sign a single one into law.

Earlier in October, the council passed a long-deliberated basic law to serve as a constitution which would define the powers of the council and Mr. Arafat's executive authority. But Mr. Arafat has not approved the law.

In July, the council also made an unprecedented call for Mr. Arafat to remove his entire self-rule cabinet because of widespread corruption in the ministries.

Almost all of the ministers then offered a mass resignation, but Mr. Arafat has until now refused to accept their resignations or bend to repeated council calls for a cabinet reshuffle.

A council committee found that corruption and abuse of position was widespread in the self-rule ministries and specifically pointed a finger at three ministers for involvement in corruption.

Netanyahu says he'll support Orthodox despite U.S. Jews

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu affirmed Friday that he will back legislation cementing Orthodox control over religion in Israel — a move likely to anger American Jews.

Most American Jews belong either to the Reform and Conservative movements that have been seeking a foothold in Israel through court recognition of conversions carried out by their rabbis.

Earlier this week, Orthodox legislators threatened to bring down the Netanyahu government unless he pushes their legislation through parliament by the end of November. Mr. Netanyahu promised them in a meeting to back their bills, aides said at the time.

Commenting publicly on the confrontation Friday, Mr. Netanyahu said he hoped the rival streams could reach a compromise.

But if such efforts fail, he said he would back the Orthodox who dominate religious affairs in Israel. Referring to the court battles of the reform and conservative movements, Mr. Netanyahu said: "There is this attempt to change the (religious) status quo and

this calls upon us to support the legislation."

Rabbi Uri Reggev, the leader of the reform movement in Israel, warned of an angry backlash from American Jews. "The message that is coming from the rabbinate is that reform and conservative Judaism is not Judaism. If this is now confirmed by the Israeli legislature, this will have horrendous consequences," he said.

At issue is legislation that would encode into law a practice, under which only conversions performed by Orthodox rabbis in Israel are recognised by the Israeli Interior Ministry.

The legislation would not affect reform and conservative conversions carried out in the United States and which are recognised in Israel.

The bill passed in a first reading this summer, but was then shelved as a committee headed by Finance Minister Yassov Neeman tried to find a compromise. Mr. Neeman reportedly proposed setting up a conversion institute with representatives from the three streams, an idea rejected by the Orthodox leadership this week.

The conversion bill is now

being prepared for the required second and third readings in parliament.

Rabbi Reggev said it was not certain whether the conversion bill will get a majority in the 120-member parliament.

Two of Mr. Netanyahu's coalition partners — the centrist Third Way Party and Israel Be'aliya Party representing Soviet immigrants — are expected to vote against the bill or abstain. Together, the two parties have 10 seats. Mr. Netanyahu's coalition has 66 members.

Much depends on opposition leader Ehud Barak who has been careful not to alienate the religious parties whose support is crucial for winning an election in Israel.

On Friday, Mr. Barak met with Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual leader of the religious Shas Party. Mr. Barak was evasive Friday when asked how his party would vote on the conversion bill. "We must continue in search of a compromise," he said.

Both Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Barak will have to face American Jewish leaders in November when address the council of Jewish federations in Indianapolis. The meeting starts Nov. 14.

Israel worries over ties with Egypt after ambassador-bellydancer case

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli officials rushed Friday to contain damage to relations with Cairo after dismissing accusations by an Israeli bellydancer that the Egyptian ambassador tried to rape her.

"We have been on the brink of disaster," a high-level Foreign Ministry official told AFP, saying he still feared diplomatic fallout from the accusations made against Ambassador Mohammad Bassiouny.

The ministry fears that even though the accusation was dismissed, the affair could be seen as a plot by Israeli secret services against Mr. Bassiouny, said the official, who asked not to be named.

The incident is sure to be discussed when Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa makes a rare visit to Israel, next Monday, ostensibly to attend the opening of a peace centre run by former Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Israeli-Egyptian ties have been strained for the past year, and the Foreign Ministry official said he feared the Bassiouny affair would affect the chances of winning the release of Azzam Azzam, an Israeli imprisoned by Egypt for espionage.

Israeli justice officials closed investigations this week into the bellydancer's

accusations that Mr. Bassiouny tried to rape her on Aug. 13, saying there was no evidence to back up the charges.

Mr. Bassiouny said the charges were part of an attempt to blackmail him.

State Prosecutor Edna Arbel went on Israel Radio to underline that investigations "showed without a doubt that there was no basis for the accusations."

"By (the plaintiff's) own testimony, it was not a case of attempted rape, or even of harassment. There was no force," she said.

The ambassador "gave her presents and she met him several times," Ms. Arbel said and hinted that the bellydancer had tried to seduce the ambassador.

The Foreign Ministry's Director General Eytan Bensur underlined that "the matter is closed. I have full confidence in this ambassador and appreciate his work."

The government, wary of a diplomatic scandal, had imposed a complete press blackout on the two months of investigations. The case "threatened to damage national interests," Ms. Arbel said.

But with the affair closed, Israeli papers ran front page headlines on the story Friday, along with collar photos of

the bellydancer in costume with her face obscured.

Mr. Bassiouny told the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharanot: "I have never had anything to hide. I have been the victim of a blackmail attempt and I am happy that the truth has been revealed."

Mr. Bassiouny, ambassador to Israel since 1986, accused Israeli officials last month of harassing him after guards at the Egyptian border searched his car and authorities allowed a protest outside his residence.

The unnamed bellydancer, who often performed at embassy functions, claimed that the attempted rape occurred at the home of a mutual friend where Mr. Bassiouny had invited her, then turned up alone to meet her.

Police questioned Mr. Bassiouny, who did not evoke his right to diplomatic immunity, and the woman, whom they at one point threatened to accuse of blackmail.

In the end, they decided not to press charges against Mr. Bassiouny or the dancer. Her lawyer, Ori Stendel, accused investigators of "putting state interests before the interests of my client."

"There was no pressure from the government to bury this affair," Ms. Arbel insisted.



NO MOVIE, NO MARRIAGE: Young Chinese partners attend a video screening in a small Beijing hospital Friday. Before couples can obtain their marriage licence, the government requires them to take a physical examination, register with a hospital and watch a video screening in a bid to improve their sex education. The video, conducted by medical personnel, is designed to prepare them for a life of marriage (Reuters photo)

Libya vows not to hand over Lockerbie suspects at Hague

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Libya reiterated Friday its refusal to hand over to either Britain or the United States the two suspects wanted for trial in the Lockerbie bombing.

Britain and the United States demand the extradition of two Libyan suspects believed to have orchestrated the explosion aboard the Pan Am airliner which plunged into the Scottish village of Lockerbie, claiming 270 lives in 1988.

In their first address since hearings opened on Monday at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Libya's lawyers contested the accusations, originally made by a Scottish judge. The accusations were "manoeuvres calculated to intimidate," said the lawyers, adding that they constituted "a determination to destabilise Libya" and that no real proof existed to indict Libya in the bombing.

They reiterated Libya's determination to never hand over the suspects to either Scotland, where they would be tried, or to the United States, saying the huge media interest in the case would lead to an unfair trial.

"They are already presumed

guilty," said Professor Jean Salmon, one of the Belgian lawyers in the delegation representing Libya at The Hague.

On Monday, Lord Hardie, Scotland's senior legal officer, had given his personal assurance that a trial conducted in Scotland "will be entirely fair," saying the suspects could "receive visits from international observers at any reasonable time."

But during Friday's address another member of Libya's delegation, Abdul El Murradi Suleiman, condemned the "arrogance and overweening dictatorial conceit of Washington and London" which he claims blocks Libya's desire to open up the investigation.

Only the Germans, he said, have decided to fully investigate whether the bomb was planted by Libyan suspects before take-off from Frankfurt, as contended by Britain and the United States.

Another theory put forward contends that the bomb could have been planted with Iranian involvement at Heathrow during a stop-over.

On a more general note, Libya's representatives at the ICJ sought to portray Libya as the defender of oppressed

peoples against the superpowers.

"Since the 1970s Libya has backed many national liberation movements, some of whose leaders are now the presidents of independent countries, such as Nelson Mandela," representative Hamed Ahmad Elhouderi told the judges.

The South African president recently announced that he would be visiting Colonel Qadhafi, Libya's premier, with whom he would discuss the bombing investigation. Spokesman for the families of the British victims, Jim Swire, said Mr. Mandela was "very interested" in the case and may discuss it with British Prime Minister Tony Blair at November's Commonwealth heads of state summit, in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Mr. Swire noted that the inquiry into possible Iranian involvement had been blocked by London since Margaret Thatcher's premiership, putting the emphasis on Libyan culpability for which, he said, there was not enough evidence.

The fate of the two Libyan suspects will not be decided during these proceedings. The

court is hearing the British and U.S. contention that the court here does not have jurisdiction to try the case as Libya requested.

Libya tabled a petition with the ICJ in March 1992 to rule Britain and the U.S. in violation of an international air safety convention in the 1988 Lockerbie Pan Am bombing because Libya claims the two Western powers are hindering its attempts to investigate the case.

Christopher Greenwood, international law professor and member of the British delegation, said Tripoli's petition was made "the very same day" that the U.N. secretary-general reported Libya's refusal to cooperate in the Lockerbie investigation. U.N. sanctions followed days later.

At the opening of the hearings Monday, Britain derided Libya's petition as a ploy to escape the U.N. sanctions.

Sir Franklin Berman, member of the British delegation, said "to maintain the accusation without the slightest shred of proof or even probability is nothing less than shameful."

The hearings continue until Oct. 22.

Iran warns of sturgeon extinction in Caspian

TEHRAN (AFP) — Sturgeon, the fish which produces caviar, is in imminent danger of extinction in the Caspian Sea because of environmental hazards and over-fishing, Iran warned on Friday.

The head of a state fishing research centre, identified only by his last name Amini, said overfishing had caused sturgeon reserves to slump in the Caspian, which produces up to 90 per cent of the world's caviar.

The other threat comes from oil exploration in the closed sea by neighbouring Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, along with industrial and agricultural wastes, Amini said at a seminar of Caspian states in Gorgan, northern Iran.

Amini called for an accord between the countries bordering the sea — which also include Iran and Russia — to regulate exploitation of its resources. "Iran, realising this threat, took precautions several years ago which include fighting illegal and overfishing and improper poaching methods," he said, quoted by the official Iranian news agency, IRNA.

Amini offered Iran's help to protect the Caspian environment "while seeking to preserve the countries' legitimate interests."

Foreign tourists provide easy pickings for Yemen's tribes

SANAA (AFP) — Yemen's notoriously unruly and heavily armed tribes, who control large tracts of the country's interior, regularly kidnap foreigners to use as bargaining chips to force concessions from the government.

Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world, and money has played a part in the abduction of more than 100 foreigners since 1993 and is the most likely motive behind two more kidnappings this week.

Usually the tribes see kidnapping as a short cut to forcing their way through bureaucratic red tape to get cash, jobs or other concessions from the government.

A Briton and two Yemeni companions were being held in a remote mountain hideaway on Friday after being kidnapped two days earlier near Zanaar, 50 kilometres south of the capital Sanaa, a tribal official said.

A Yemeni official said the kidnappers wanted financial aid for the Bani Dabian tribe and were also demanding that the government complete electricity and water projects in the region.

The three were snatched on the same day that four elderly French tourists were picked up by armed tribesmen in the north of the country, but their captivity lasted just 24 hours before they were released safe and sound.

Groups of tourists or foreign workers trundling through the lawless interior of Yemen, often

to visit archaeological sites, are easy pickings for the tribesmen.

Catastrophic floods in the eastern Maanib region in 1996 triggered a spate of kidnappings as tribes sought to wrest compensation out of the government.

A French diplomat was held for 10 days in October of that year by the Jilm tribe demanding compensation for houses destroyed by the floods and civil servant jobs for their members. Three months later, five Polish tourists were snatched by the Beni Jabr tribe, which also wanted food compensation, as did another tribe which held four Germans hostage in March.

Sometimes the reasons behind a kidnapping can be more idiosyncratic.

Tribesmen who held an Italian tourist for five days in August said they wanted the government to return a car confiscated several years ago because their papers were not in order.

The head of the tribe also wanted to make a protest because his son failed end-of-year examinations in a state school. Chinese experts fell victim to the kidnappers in early 1994 by a tribe wanting to halt construction of a new road, while other tribesmen snatched three French tourists in January 1994, this time to demand a new road be built.

In March this year, seven Germans were held hostage in the eastern region of Hadramut by a tribe demanding \$7 mil-

lion owed to them by a crooked car salesman who bought vehicles from them without paying.

And sometimes a vicious circle develops. Last year a tribe kidnapped 17 French tourists to demand the release of one of its members imprisoned for abducting an American.

As well as tourists, employees of foreign companies are favourite targets of the kidnappers.

In 1993, six employees of companies dealing with Total Yemen were held by a tribe which only released them when the oil company agreed to take on 80 of its members.

In August a tribesman shot and wounded an Italian tourist in a botched kidnapping attempt, but the violence was exceptional and all hostages that have been abducted have been released unharmed.

Many have continued their holidays in Yemen after their release, and have recounted tales of astonishing hospitality from their kidnappers who slaughter sheep for them and ply them with whisky.

However, the Yemeni authorities take a dimmer view, accusing the kidnappers of being urged on by "foreign powers" to destabilise the country and to scare away vital tourism hard currency.

In a bid to deter bad publicity, the government has tried to restrict the movement of foreigners and tourists inside the country, but so far without much success.



British woman reunited with kids after ban on nude bathing

LONDON (AFP) — The appeal court here Friday overruled a judge who ordered a mother separated from her two children after she took a bath with them and her boyfriend, prompting a complaint from her estranged husband. Declaring that the judge was "plainly wrong" to take the nine-year-old daughter and six-year-old son away from their mother, the appeal court said: "In a happy well-run family how members behave in the privacy of their own home is their business and no one else's." The mother said the original court ruling in June "frightened me to death." The bath, she explained, "was just popping in together for five minutes on a Sunday morning. It was all so innocent and it became so misconstrued."

Al Pacino leaves his mark in cement

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Al Pacino is the latest actor to leave his hand and footprints in a cement square at Hollywood's Chinese Theatre, a tradition that began 71 years ago. Cheering on the kneeling 57-year-old star of "The Godfather" and "Scarface" on Thursday were his father Sal Pacino and fellow actor Keanu Reeves. The ceremony was held when Pacino and Reeves came out of the movie theatre where they attended the opening of their latest flick, "The Devil's Advocate," in which Reeves works for a rich and powerful lawyer, Pacino, who turns out to be the devil incarnate.

Estefan accused of betrayal

MIAMI (AFP) — Hardline foes of Cuban President Fidel Castro are accusing U.S. singer Gloria Estefan — a favourite daughter of the Cuban-American community — of betraying them in her quest to defend freedom of speech. The singer, who was born in Cuba and exiled to the U.S. after the revolution in 1959, triggered a fierce debate when she sided with Pegggy McKintley, a Miami city worker sacked for publicly condemning a local ban on performances by Cuban artists. In a letter to the Miami Herald, Estefan said she "cannot imagine how we could explain to the people of Cuba, who have suffered so much oppression, that the very freedoms that they desperately desire and deserve are being annihilated in their name."

Callers seeking travel information get sex talk instead

PHOENIX — Telephone callers in southern Arizona seeking information on driving in Mexico are being greeted these days by a throaty-voiced woman asking: "What is it about a man that gets me so turned on?" Whoops. The phone book for the region has a wrong number listed in 575,000 books. "It's a very unfortunate situation," said Jon Lentz, a spokesman for U.S. West. "We take pride in our directories and one mistake is one too much."

Mailman finds puppy in mailbox

DETROIT — A motor city mailman got an unexpected delivery when he found a shivering, emaciated, week-old puppy abandoned in a downtown mailbox. The Michigan Humane Society said the postal worker extracted the whimpering black and tan terrier puppy and brought it to a shelter, where it was shivering. The group said the puppy had probably been inside the box in several hours.

Woman gets post in Iranian government

TEHRAN (AFP) — A woman has been appointed to a senior post in the Iranian government, a first for a woman in the Islamic Republic. The woman, who is a member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, was appointed as a vice minister of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The appointment was announced by the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the highest body in the Islamic Republic. The woman is the first woman to hold such a high position in the Iranian government.

Police find puppy in mailbox

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